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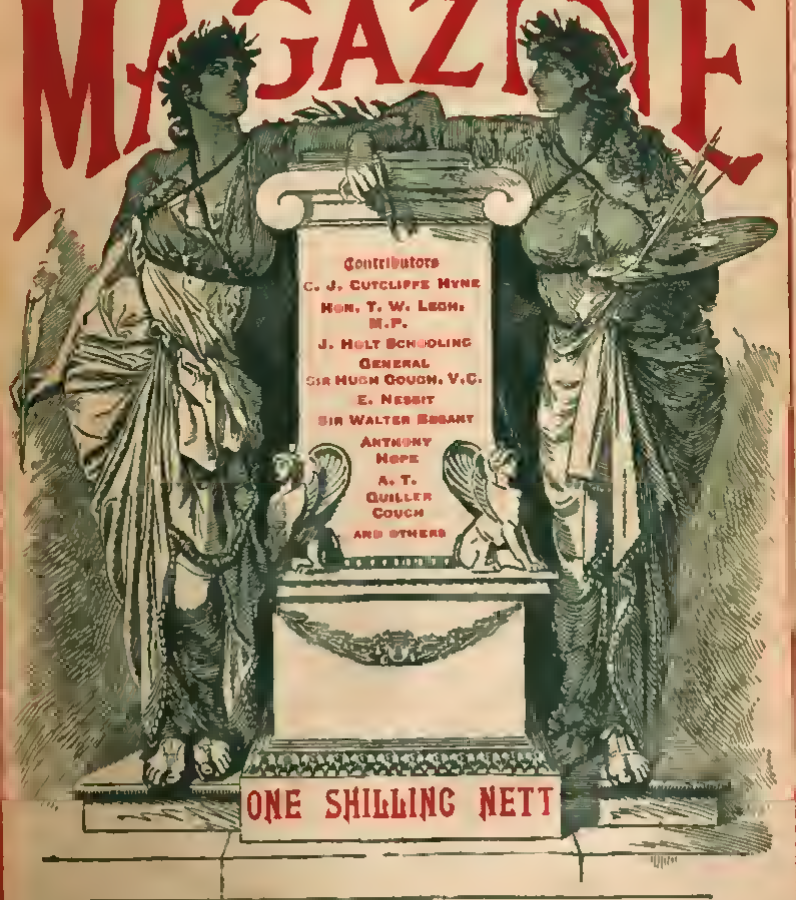
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ISHING, remarked the Colonel, is like learning a foreign language. The more brains a man has the more difficult it is for him to catch fish or to learn languages. You take a child and put him in a French school, and in six months he will speak French like a native, whereas the brainiest man in England might work at French for six years, and even then he would not speak it well. As for fishing, the best fisherman I ever knew was a half-witted darkey boy. He could catch more fish in an hour than any six of the leading citizens of New Berlinopolisville could catch in a day. There was my old friend and neighbour Professor Van Wagener. He was in some respects the ablest scientific man I ever met, but he never caught a fish in his life, except an occasional minnow. Now and then a trout would take his hook, but, the moment that trout was pulled far enough out of the water to see the man that had caught

him, he would say to himself, 'Excuse me,' and he'd wriggle off that hook and go and hide himself under a rock for the rest of the day, as if he were ashamed of having paid any attention to Van Wagener's bait."

Speaking of fishing reminds me of the electrical fishing line that Professor Van Wagener invented. He and I had been fishing together one day, and neither of us had caught anything worth speaking of. On our way home Van Wagener says to me, "The reason why we don't catch any fish is the grossly unscientific way in which we go about it. When a fish gets on my hook, I always lose him before I can get him out of the water. Now, if I had a metallic line, connected with a small battery, and could give the fish a shock the moment he took the hook in his mouth, I could land him without the least trouble."

"Very likely you could," said I. "But where would be the sport of playing the fish?"

"I don't care anything for sport," replied the Professor. "When I go fishing I want to catch something, and I tell you right here, that I'm going to invent an apparatus that will catch fish every time. You stick to your old apparatus and have all the sport you want. I'll have my electrical fishing line, and catch every trout there is in the stream. If I was a betting man I wouldn't mind betting you that the first time I go fishing with my scientific apparatus, I'll make the biggest catch that has ever been known in the State of Illinois."

And so he did, though it wasn't just the sort of catch that he wanted to make.

About a week later Van Wagener called me over to his house, which, as I told you before, was next door to mine, and showed me what he had done. He had a fishing rod with a long line fastened to it made of thin, flexible, braided wire. Instead of a reel he had a small battery attached to the rod, and by pressing a button with his thumb he could send a current through the line which would astonish any fish that it might happen to hit. I forgot to say that he had about half a dozen hooks fastened to his line, and he explained to me that if these hooks were baited properly, he would be sure of catching half a dozen trout at once. There was one thing about the apparatus which I couldn't help admiring. The line was as flexible as a silk line, but it was about as strong as a ship's cable. Van Wagener showed me that you couldn't break it either by pulling or twisting, and that it would turn the edge of any knife that you might try to cut it with. I knew well enough that his electric battery was all nonsense, but it did seem as if he had invented a first-class fishing line, though, of course, he couldn't appreciate its real merits.

Van Wagener wanted me to go to the nearest trout stream with him and try the new apparatus, but I declined. I knew that he wouldn't succeed in catching any fish, and that he would naturally be disappointed, and express himself in scientific language that might not be so easy to bear. He was a good man, but when things went wrong with him he would use scientific terms in a way that was about four times as irritating as any ordinary unscientific cursing would have been. So I told him he had better try his apparatus alone, and that if it didn't happen to meet his expectations he could come to my house and free his mind after the thing was over. He didn't like it that I declined to go with him, and when he started out, with his rod on his shoulder and a big basket on his arm, he called to me that I needn't expect him to bring me any trout, for he intended to sell his whole catch to the fishmonger.

The nearest place for trout fishing was a pool about two miles from where the Professor lived, and about half a mile from any house. I had told Van Wagener about this pool, for it was the place where I had once lost the biggest trout I ever

hooked; but I hadn't told him that the pool was the property of Deacon Sammis, and that the Deacon wouldn't allow any man to fish there without paying for the privilege. It so happened that Deacon Sammis was away from home that day, and the Professor went to the trout pool and baited his hooks—for he never tried to fish with flies—and sat down on the bank, and started in to fish, without

"He intended to sell his whole catch to the fishmonger."

being interfered with. Mrs. Sammis, however, had seen him crossing the field with his rod and basket, and, being a woman who looked sharply after the family interests, she resolved to go down to the pool and tell the Professor that he must either pay or leave.

Mrs. Sammis was a young woman, being the Deacon's third wife, and a

remarkably good-looking woman. When she came behind the Professor and said, "No trespassing allowed here, sir! You can't fish in this pool unless you pay five dollars first!" he looked up at her, and exclaimed, "Bless my soul! What a pretty woman!" He didn't mean anything by it, having a sort of habit of talking out loud to himself, but it had its effect on Mrs. Sammis all the same She knew who the Professor was, and was mightily pleased to be complimented by so distinguished a man. So she said, "I didn't know it was you, Professor! Of course you're welcome to fish here as much as you please. My husband says there's no danger of your catching anything" Then she asked Van Wagener what bait he was using; and, being glad of the opportunity to explain his new invention, he asked her to sit down beside him and see what really scientific trout-fishing would do

Mrs. Sammis was an intelligent woman, and she was a good deal interested in the electric fishing line. She drew pretty close to the Professor while he was explaining the battery to her, and she said that she did hope he would catch something, just to show how the battery would work. All of a sudden a big trout jumped clean out of the water. This excited Van Wagener, and he resolved to catch that trout then and there, so as to give Mrs. Sammis a convincing proof of the great merit of his apparatus. So he started to throw his line just over the place where the trout had jumped, making sure that the fish was waiting for him. Now, Van Wagener knew no more about casting a line than a baby knows He swung the hooks over his head till they rested on the grass behind him, and then he tried to fling them back into the pool, with about as much judgment and delicacy as if he had been working with a flail. The result was that one hook caught Mrs. Sammis in the upper part of the right ear, and another caught the Professor in the nape of the neck, and there they were, fastened to one another by a bit of line about a foot long, that couldn't be cut except by the finest sort of steel file.

Of course Mrs. Sammis gave a scream when the hook went into her ear; and what with that, and the pain in the back of his own neck, the Professor lost his presence of mind, and accidentally pressed the button of the battery. This brought another shriek from Mrs. Sammis, for there are few things more startling than a good smart electric shock. Next the Professor threw down the fishing rod, and this gave a fresh twist to the hook, and led him to use a few scientific terms. It was foolish in him to try to break the line, knowing as he did that it was much too strong to be broken, but for all that he did try to break it, and in the process pulled at Mrs. Sammis's ear till she burst out crying, and begged him to let her die where she was. By this time he began to realise that he was in a mighty bad situation, but he grappled with it like the intelligent man he always was—that is, when he had had time to cool down a little.

He took up the rod again very carefully, and succeeded in unfastening the line. Then he coiled the line up into a tight little ball, so that it couldn't trail on the ground or catch in anything. Meanwhile he was begging Mrs. Sammis to be calm and assuring her that he would instantly take her to the doctor's and have the hook taken out of her ear. Mrs. Sammis cried a little longer, and then she stopped and said that the sooner they saw the doctor the better, and she did hope that the Deacon wouldn't get home until she and the Professor had been cut loose. You see the Deacon, though he was one of the best of men, was a little hasty in his temper, and two or three times he had shot a man in circumstances that really didn't call for any such energetic action, as he afterwards admitted himself.

Well, the Professor and Mrs Sammis set out for the doctor's, which was a good mile from the trout pool. The line that connected the two unfortunate people was

so short that nearly every step they took it would stir up the hooks to fresh activity, and fetch fresh shrieks from Mrs. Sammis. Finally the Professor told her that she must allow him to put his arm around her waist, and that she must put her head on his shoulder. By this means they could walk without jerking the line.

"The result was that one hook caught Mrs. Sammis in the ear."

Mrs. Sammis at first wouldn't hear of any such plan, but after a few minutes the pain was too much for her, and she accepted the Professor's proposal. It must have been rather a pretty sight to see the two walking slowly across the field in such close proximity, and if I had been a younger man I don't know that I should have objected to take the Professor's place, fish-hooks and all.

Before they were fairly out of the field the Deacon's first wife's mother, who lived with him, saw them out of her window, and called the servant girl to help her

"She must allow him to put his arm around her waist

to pack up and leave the house where such an abandoned and shameless female lived. Mrs. Sammis knew of a sort of back path, by which she and the Professor

could reach the doctor's office without taking to the main street, and of course they took this back path, not expecting to meet anybody. But you all know how it is. If you happen to be in a situation where you don't wish to be seen, all the friends and all the enemies you ever had will be sure to show up inside of twenty minutes. Why, I knew a young American man who wanted to have a quiet talk with a young American girl here in London. They had just arrived on the same steamer, and the girl's parents didn't like the young man, and wouldn't let the girl see him if they could help it. Well, he made an appointment with her to meet at St. Paul's Cathedral, calculating that if they went up into the ball nobody would see them except the guide, and they didn't care anything about him. Of course they had no sooner got up to the highest gallery than they met a party of nine Americans, who were old friends of the girl's, and were overjoyed to see her. They told her that they were going to call on her parents that very evening. It's my opinion that if the prophet Jonah had made an appointment to meet his best girl in the whale's cabin, he'd have found about a dozen friends leaning up against the ribs and waiting for him with bull's-eye lanthorns in their hands.

However, I'm wandering from the subject. What I intended to say was that just as soon as the Professor and Mrs. Summis turned into the path they began to meet people, especially boys. The grown folks merely looked at them sadly and gave them a wide berth, so as not to contract any of their wickedness; but the boys generally hooted at them, and called the Professor names, and said they were going to tell Deacon Summis. This was pretty hard to bear, but there was no help for it. The Professor wanted to stop and explain the state of things to everybody whom they met, but Mrs. Summis wouldn't allow him to do anything of the sort. She told him he had better keep his breath until he should come to explain things to the Deacon, which she calculated he would find a middling tough job. In spite of the fact that she had her head on the Professor's shoulder and he had his arm around her waist, she was about as mad at him as a woman could be, and told him fifty times that he was the worst specimen of a chattering idiot that she had ever dreamed of.

As for the Professor, he was just scientific enough to wonder why she made so much disturbance over so small a matter, and he hadn't the least idea that the Deacon would feel annoyed, even if he should happen to meet them on the way to the doctor's. So he walked on, talking about his new fishing apparatus, and trying his best to console Mrs. Summis. When they reached the doctor's office the two hooks were extracted with very little difficulty, and the Professor went home and explained to his wife why he hadn't caught any trout.

That was the beginning of the great scandal that divided all New Berlinopolisville into two parties—those who believed the Professor's story, and those who didn't. I am sorry to say that the latter was very much the larger party, and that Mrs. Van Wagener belonged to it. The Professor came over to my house that evening, and said that he rather thought he had better stay with me for a while, which accordingly he did. At times Mrs. Van Wagener would come to my door and say that she wanted to see that miserable man, but I never let her in, knowing that there would be trouble if I did. Similarly Deacon Summis came one day with a big horsewhip, and demanded to see "that scientific hound," but I explained to him that if he wanted to interview anybody with a horsewhip, I was at his service, but that no hounds, scientific or otherwise, were to be found on my premises. Nothing came of it, for the Deacon hadn't brought his pistol with him and he never thought it worth while to call a second time. The Deacon's divorce suit was a failure, for the testimony of the doctor who had cut out the fishhooks

satisfied the jury, and they gave a verdict which entirely exonerated Mrs. Sammis and the Professor But of course that had no effect so far as the public was concerned. People had made up their minds about the affair long before the

"Deacon Sammis demanded to see that scientific hound

suit came to be tried, and they didn't allow such a little thing as a verdict to influence them.

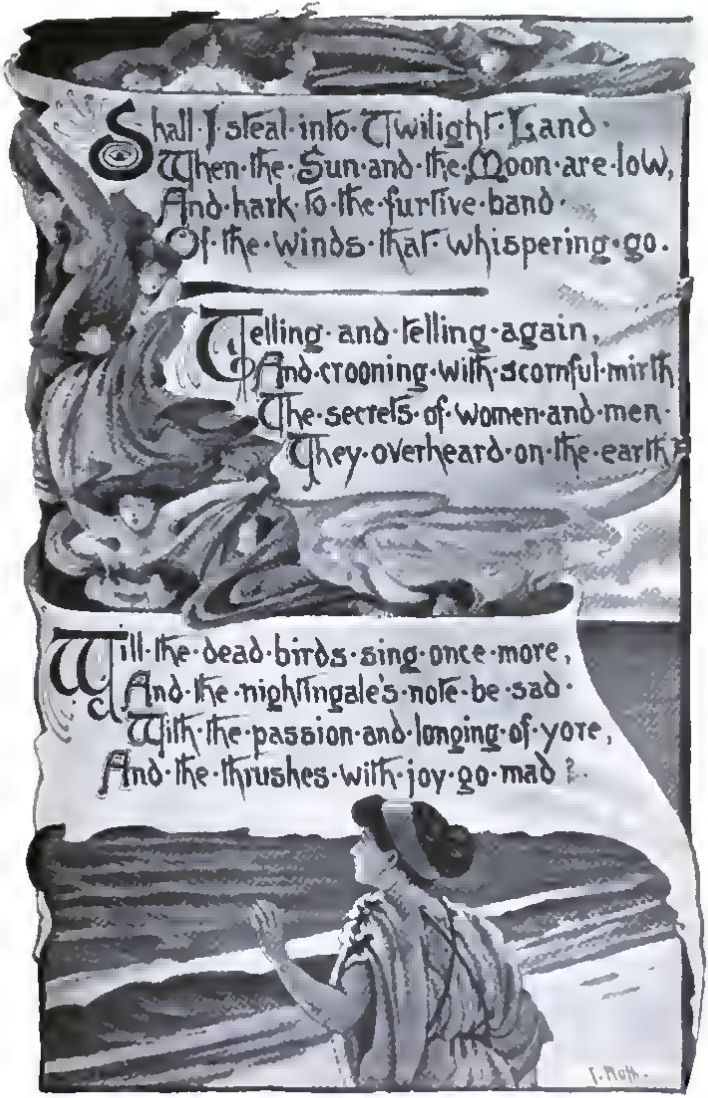
It was so clear to me that the Professor's usefulness in New Berlinopolisville was gone, that I induced him to accept a Professorship in Chicago, that was offered to him while he was stopping at my house. What with Mrs. Van Wagener waiting

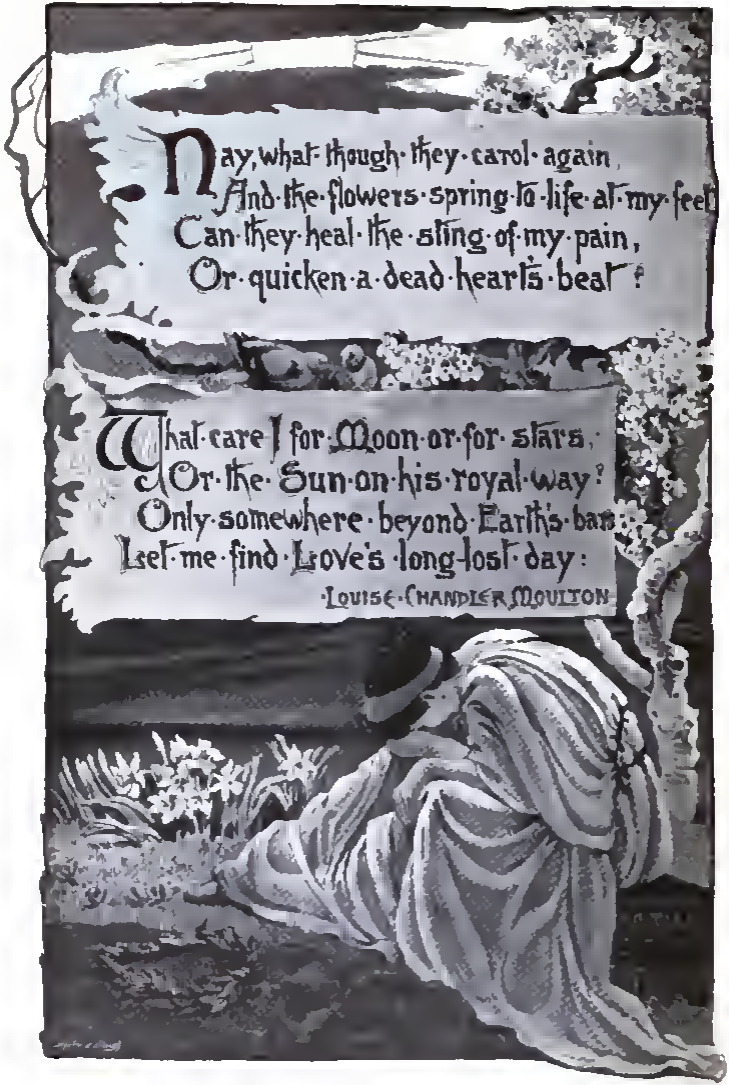
to make it hot for him day and night, and what with the Deacon swearing to shoot him on sight, New Berlinopolisville didn't afford that quiet and seclusion which a scientific man needs, if he intends to do any valuable scientific work. The upshot of it all was that one night I drove the Professor out of town, and took him to a railway station where he took the train for Chicago. I lost sight of him after that, but as he never got into any startling difficulty in Chicago, I suppose that either he must have died, or else he must have quitted inventing things All the same, I wish he had given me that recipe for making his metallic fishing line. There would have been a lot of money in that invention if it had been properly handled.

W. L. Alden

When I wander away
with
Death
This life is a fleeting breath
And whither and how shall I go
When I wander away with Death
By a path that I do not know ?

Shall I find the throne of the Moon,
And kneel with her lovers there
To pray for a cold sweet boon
From her beauty cold and fair?
Or shall I make haste to the Sun,
And warm at his passionate fire
My heart by sorrow undone,
And sick with a vain desire?


Shall I steal into Twilight Land
When the Sun and the Moon are low,
And hark to the furtive band
Of the winds that whispering go.
Telling and telling again,
And crooning with scornful mirth
The secrets of women and men
They overheard on the earth?
Will the dead birds sing once more,
And the nightingale's note be sad
With the passion and longing of yore,
And the thrushes with joy go mad?
I. Roth.


Nay, what though they carol again,
And the flowers spring to life at my feet
Can they heal the sting of my pain,
Or quicken a dead heart's beat?
What care I for Moon or for stars,
Or the Sun on his royal way?
Only somewhere beyond Earth's bars
Let me find Love's long-lost day:
LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON

PRINCESS CHERRY-BLOSSOM

ONCE upon a time there lived a King and Queen who had no children. At last a little daughter was born to them, and her birth occasioned great rejoicings throughout the land.

When she was three weeks old the King and Queen decided that it was time for her to be christened, and they invited six fairies to act as godmothers. There were seven fairies in the kingdom, but the seventh was not invited because she and the Queen were not upon very friendly terms.

When the christening day came all the court assembled in the throne-room. The King and Queen sat on thrones under a dais of cloth of gold embroidered with emeralds and pearls. At the foot of the steps, leading to the throne, was placed the mother-of-pearl cradle in which the baby lay sleeping peacefully and dreaming of the games she used to play in Babyland before she came into the world.

When all was ready the fairy godmothers came forward, one by one, and, bending over the cradle, gave the Princess their gifts. The first gave her the gift

The Seventh Fairy

of beauty; and no sooner were the words pronounced than the whole Court was astonished at the change which took place in the Princess's appearance. She opened her eyes, and they were seen to be of the deepest sapphire blue. Her complexion, which hitherto had been of a brick-dust, changed into the loveliest and most delicate pink and white. What little hair she had was of no particular colour at her birth, but, at the fairy's words, it gave way to a mass of golden curls.

Then the first fairy retired, after curtseying to the King and Queen, and the second took her place. She endowed the Princess with cleverness, and all those present marvelled to see the light of intelligence that shone in the baby's eyes.

The third gave the gift of lovableness, and in a moment the hearts of all went out to the tiny occupant of the cradle. Even the Lord Chamberlain, a selfish, hard-hearted, worldly man, felt the tears come into his eyes as he looked on her.

The fourth promised health, and the Court doctor whispered to his colleague that, till that moment, he had not realised what a fine baby the Princess was. She was, he said, certainly the finest baby he had ever seen.

The fifth gave wealth, and at the same time placed on the pillow beside the little golden head that great fairy gift—the purse of inexhaustible gold.

Then the sixth was just coming forward when an interruption occurred. There was a bustle among the courtiers and guards who were standing at the doors of the room, and those present had not time to realise what had happened, before the seventh fairy—the uninvited one—strode up the room and took her stand by the side of the Princess's cradle. She cast a vindictive glance on the King and the Queen, and then, without speaking to them, bent over the smiling child, and produced from her pocket a dry and withered cherry-stone. Muttering a few

words of incantation she thrust the cherry stone into the baby's rosebud of a mouth, and, standing upright, cried in a loud, harsh voice,—

"This is my gift—a cherry-stone for a heart. The Princess shall never feel love for man or woman or child or bird or beast until the cherry-stone is cast out and the heart returns to its place"

Having said this, she cast another malignant glance round and vanished.

The Court was thrown into consternation; but the sixth fairy—whose place the uninvited one had taken—stepped quietly forward, and stood awhile by the cradle, looking down on the baby with grave, intent eyes. Presently she murmured,—

"My sister said nothing about flowers. This is my gift: the Princess shall love roses."

This was small consolation to the parents, still, as the Queen remarked to the King,—"It is better that our darling should love roses than that she should love nothing at all"

And the King replied,—"Just so."

The christening of the Princess came to an end very gloomily.

Now, as soon as the seventh fairy had thrust the cherry-stone into the baby's mouth, all who were present had noted that a curious change came over the baby face. The pretty colour, which formed part of the first fairy's gift, faded away, and left a uniform whiteness, like the whiteness of a lily. The softness left the eyes and they became hard, while the pouting, curved lips grew set. She was still very lovely—in a way quite as lovely as she was before—but it was with a different kind of loveliness.

And as she grew up the same peculiarities presented themselves. The hardness in her face grew, and seemed to correspond with the hardness of her heart. When she was seventeen she was the most beautiful princess in the world—and the most unloving People called her Princess Cherry-blossom, because of her colour and the story of the cherry-stone, and she seemed to like the name. In secret they called her Princess Icicle.

Although every one loved her she seemed perfectly incapable of returning their love. Her parents, the Court, the people, all lavished affection upon her, and she simply took it as her due. One thing, and one thing only, seemed to interest her, and that was her rose-garden. In this garden she collected roses of every sort and kind from every part of the world, which she tended herself with the utmost care. If any one wanted to please the Princess, all he had to do was to present her with some new variety of rose When people knew this there came to the palace a constant stream of rose-growers with their gifts, until at last every known variety of rose all the world over had found its way into the Princess Cherry-blossom's rose-garden.

I need not say that the poor King and Queen were very sad when they found how little their only child cared for them. They adored her with all their hearts, but she did not love them in the least. She was, in fact, as cold and indifferent to her father and mother as she was to the rest of the world.

At last the time came when it was thought that the Princess ought to marry. Her parents were growing old. She was heir to the throne, and her father felt that if he could only see her happily married he could die in peace. But the Princess would not hear of such a thing She did not like anybody well enough, she said, to marry him. And to this determination she kept, notwithstanding the fact that all the handsomest and richest princes came and laid their crowns at her feet.

"She stretched out her hand to pluck the flower

But one night she had a curious dream. She dreamt that she was walking in the dusk of twilight in a large garden. After a while she saw a light shining in the distance. She went up to it, and found a rose such as she had never seen before. It was golden—that is, its petals were thickly powdered with gold dust. In the heart of the rose there lay a large drop of dew, and from this drop of dew came the light which had attracted her. Princess Cherry blossom thought that she had never seen anything so lovely in all her life. She stretched out her hand to pluck the flower—and woke up.

As soon as she was up and dressed she went to her father and told him that she must and would have the golden rose. It was in vain the poor King protested

that he had never heard of such a thing as the golden rose—that he did not suppose that there was such a thing in the world. The Princess insisted on his issuing a proclamation that any one who would find and bring her the golden rose should receive as his reward anything that he might like to ask, even if it were her hand. The King had grown so accustomed to let the Princess have her own way in everything, that he yielded, although he grumbled a good deal at having to do so.

No sooner was the proclamation issued than the princes who had sought the Princess's hand in marriage and all the young nobles who had not ventured to do so, much as they wished it, set about making inquiries as to the whereabouts of the golden rose, but they could find nobody to give them any information.

At last the King bethought him of consulting the six fairy godmothers. They told him that there certainly was a golden rose, but that the only approach to the garden in which it grew was through the cave of the Fire-breathing Dragon of the Seven Colours. Now, this news damped the ardour of most of the aspirants for the Princess's hand. The cave of the Dragon of the Seven Colours was well known. It was situated on the top of the Black Mountain, which stood on the borders of the kingdom. For a long distance round people could see the fire and smoke which issued from the Dragon's lungs; but no one could get within a mile of the cave without being burnt up. The result of this state of things was, of course, that the country in the neighbourhood was destitute of any vestige of tree or flower or fern. Birds flying overhead were often seen to fall suddenly dead on the mountain side, scorched by the great heat. Stray sheep met, from time to time, with the same fate when they wandered up the mountain sides.

Now, although most of the Princess's lovers gave up in despair all thoughts of obtaining her hand when the conditions were made known, yet there were still some few who determined to persist in the attempt. But one by one these brave young men perished. The Princess did not mind about that; what she did mind was their failure to bring her the golden rose.

"It's very stupid of them," was all she said, when she heard of their deaths, "to go and get killed without bringing me the golden rose."

Now, among the Princess's servants was the son of one of the King's officers who had done good service with the army, but had made no money. This young man, therefore, was poor, but he had been appointed by the King to wait on the Princess, in reward for his father's services. Like everybody else, the page loved the Princess, but he felt that his poverty and humble rank made his passion a hopeless one.

One day, as he was walking moodily about a lonely part of the country—he always sought solitary places at this time—he was startled by a scream of terror. Looking up, he saw in a meadow, adjoining the road, an old country-woman in a red cloak endeavouring to escape from a big black bull who was charging her and who, it was evident, would overtake her in a few seconds. The page did not stop to think. He had no weapon about him but a jewel-hilted dagger, which he wore more for show than use at his girdle. Drawing this dagger, he sprang over the fence which separated the field from the road, and threw himself between the old woman and the bull, thus allowing the former to escape and scramble over the stile. The bull, furious at having lost his prey, turned his attention on the page. Six times the bull charged, and six times the page managed, by deftly springing aside, to avoid the horns. But the page was growing very exhausted by his efforts, and at the seventh charge he narrowly missed being caught by those terrible horns. However, he just managed to slip aside, and as the bull passed

"He struck out blindly with his dagger."

him he struck out blindly with his dagger. The blade of the weapon did not strike the bull, but it severed one of the black curls which were growing in a thick, compact mass on the animal's forehead, between the horns. The bull passed and turned, but instead of attempting to charge again, it raised its head, glared on the page with eyes of fire, uttered a terrific bellow, and, stamping on the ground with one of its fore feet, vanished in a cloud of smoke. Breathless and astonished, the page looked round for the old woman, and saw her sitting on the step of the stile leading into the field, whither she had first fled when he went to her rescue. She smiled graciously on the page and beckoned him to approach her, and said,—

"Sir Page, you have done a good turn for me, and, without intending it, a good turn for yourself. I know your wishes, and, if you follow my guidance, they shall be fulfilled. You shall bring the golden rose to the Princess, and you shall marry her, with my help."

The page could hardly repress a smile at these words. What the princes and nobles had failed in, with all their wealth and servants, he was to achieve by the aid of an old cottage woman in a red cloak. Nevertheless, unwilling to hurt her feelings, he thanked her politely.

"You don't believe me, I see," said the old woman. "Bring me the curl which you cut from the Black Bull's forehead in the fray."

Wishing to please her, the page went back to the scene of action, and looking round carefully he observed, shining and sleek upon the trampled grass, the severed curl. This he handed to the old woman, who took it from him, merely saying, "Meet me at this spot to-morrow at sunrise." Then she nodded to him and hobbled away in the direction of a neighbouring copse.

The page went back to the Palace and soon forgot all about the events of the morning in the presence of his Princess. His appointment with the old woman, and her absurd promise, had entirely passed out of his mind, and he only recalled them when he woke suddenly in the grey of the morning. Then he remembered; but he endeavoured to persuade himself that they were not worth thinking about, and that he would try to go to sleep again. However, he felt so wide awake and so fidgety, that he was compelled to get up and take a walk. Involuntarily his steps turned in the direction of yesterday's encounter with the bull, and when he reached the field he saw, by the stile, the figure of the old woman. She had an ancient loom before her, the framework black with age, in which she was weaving something with the greatest rapidity, while she was crooning to herself some strange ditty in words which the page failed to catch. The old woman signed to him to remain silent, but he had not been for many minutes a spectator of her work before she brought it to a conclusion. She did so just as the first beam of the rising sun touched them. Then the old woman turned her face to the Black Mountain, which loomed up to the sky in the far distance, and shook her hand threateningly in its direction as she chanted in a monotonous voice these words:—

"Woven and spun
Ere rising of sun
When the Black Bull is vanquished
The Princess is won"

Then, facing the page, she held out to him a garment of the most gossamer-like texture, which glistened beautifully, saying,—

"See what I have been working at ever since we last met. This is the veil of safety, spun and woven ere sunrise out of the curl of the Black Bull. The Black Bull is the Foul Magician, Master of the Fire-breathing Dragon of the Seven Colours, and of the enchanted garden where the golden rose grows, which he is set to guard. Put on the veil—it will cover you from head to foot—and go boldly up the mountain to the Dragon's cave. Fear not. The wearer of the veil is safe from the Dragon's fiery breath and his teeth and claws, for the veil is made of the hair of the Dragon's master. When you reach the cave, mark where the flames burn fiercest. This will be the centre of the Dragon's throat. Enter these flames without flinching and pass into the body of the Dragon. Cut your way through his side, and you will find yourself in the enchanter's garden. Then all you have to do is to find the golden rose and bring it back. Let your watchword be, 'For the love of Princess Cherry blossom.' Repeat this when fear threatens to drive you back from the enterprise, and you will regain heart."

For a moment the page hesitated to take the garment held out to him, but for a moment only. On the one hand he was risking his life on the word of this old country woman, of whom he knew nothing, except that she could not save herself from the Bull without his aid. On the other, there was the chance—the faint shadow of a chance that he might win the Princess, and without winning

"This is the veil of safety"

her, life was not worth living Therefore he put out his hand and grasped the garment firmly.

"I will attempt it," was all he said.

The old woman smiled and nodded encouragingly.

"That's right," she said. "Carry the veil and put it on when you reach the foot of the mountain. Remember that the only entrance to the garden lies through the Dragon. His body blocks the cave on all sides. Now away with you, and don't forget the watchword."

With the veil on his arm the page set out for the mountain. By the time he reached its foot the heat had grown excessive and the air was thick and suffocating with smoke, which made his eyes smart and his skin tingle. This in itself was enough to tell him that he was drawing near to the cave of the Fire-breathing Dragon. As soon, however, as he had enveloped himself in the veil, these distressing sensations left him and their place was taken by a most delightful feeling of freshness and elasticity. He began the ascent with a light heart, but his gaiety was slightly dashed by the remains, which he soon began to meet with, of the princes and nobles who had preceded him in the enterprise and had perished. They lay on either side of the path, a dozen or more of them. The first was a corpse, dried and blackened like an Egyptian mummy. The last was a heap of grey ashes—the sword, the gold chain, the jewelled clasp of the cap lying near, alone showing that, once upon a time, it had been a man like himself.

The page shuddered and clasped the veil of safety more closely round him, and hurried on as best he could, stumbling at every step, and feeling rather than seeing his way through the dense and ever-increasing smoke At length, through the blackness which surrounded him, he saw shining a lurid light, which soon resolved itself into a vast volume of fire This, as the page rightly judged, proceeded from the mouth of the Dragon of Seven Colours. Into these flames where they burned fiercest the old woman had told the page to enter, and when he thought of it his heart, for the first time that day, failed him He turned to fly back the way he came, when his watchword crossed his mind.

Again he faced the mass of fire which yawned to receive him, and, murmuring to himself, "For the love of Princess Cherry-blossom," he plunged into the mouth of the Dragon He shut his eyes instinctively and felt the huge jaws of the creature close upon him, and the convulsive movement of the throat in the act of swallowing; then, opening his eyes again, he found himself in total darkness. The veil of safety had protected him from the Dragon's teeth, as it had protected him from its fiery breath.

To grope his way to the side and to cut an aperture for himself in his living prison, was, for the page, the work of a few seconds, and it was with a sigh of relief that he sprang from the darkness into the dim twilight of the enchanted garden. He was not long in finding the golden rose. The dewdrop which shone like a liquid jewel in its heart guided him Digging carefully round its roots with his dagger, the page removed his prize. He feared that the drop of dew would fall from its place at the first movement of the rose; but, to his relief, he found that although it shook and trembled it remained firm, and he was able to carry it safely back to the spot at which he had entered the garden.

When he reached this spot a fresh surprise awaited him. He expected to have to make a gruesome return journey through the body of the Dragon He found, however, that this was not necessary. In the place of the Dragon there were only some heaps of smouldering ashes. It was evident that the terrible

"Looking . . . from her bedroom window she saw . . . the longed-for rose."

guardian had, in the throes caused by the wound in his side, turned his fires upon himself and had so brought about his own destruction.

Stepping lightly across the ashes, the page issued from the cave, and was not long in arriving at the Palace. By that time it was dark, and everybody was in bed and asleep. The page therefore went quickly to the Princess's rose-garden, and, finding the bed which the Princess had reserved, in a place of honour, for the golden rose, ever since she had seen it in her dream, he planted it there and went home.

It is impossible to describe the delight of Princess Cherry-blossom when, on looking next morning from her bedroom window, she saw shining in the rose-garden the longed-for rose. Scrambling on her clothes, she ran into the garden to make sure that her eyes had not deceived her. Then she went to the King and Queen, and insisted that they, with all the Court, should come at once to the rose-garden and see her prize. They obeyed—as everybody obeyed the imperious Princess—although the King had not had his breakfast, and so was not in the best of tempers.

After everybody had duly admired the rose, the King turned to his daughter and said,—

"Yes, my dear Cherry-blossom, it is very beautiful and costly, and I daresay rare, if not unique, but have you remembered the price you will have to pay for it?"

Now, this is just what the Princess had forgotten, and when her father reminded her of it her face fell. However, there was no help for it. The King's word was passed, and he had to issue a proclamation, summoning the finder of the golden rose to his presence to claim the reward. To everybody's surprise no claimant appeared—no claimant, that is, whose claim could be substantiated. It is true that forty-eight people in different stations of life sprang up and said that they had found the golden rose, and each had a more or less plausible story to tell of the finding. The King, in despair of getting at the truth, consulted the fairy godmothers, and their reply was this,—

"The finder of the golden rose is the master of the magic dewdrop. For him and for him only will it move from its place in the rose's heart."

The forty-eight claimants were put to the test, and one after another they failed to make the drop fall. When they shook the rose the drop quivered and glittered, with a hundred beautiful colours, but it steadily refused to be moved from its place in the rose's heart. What was to be done? It was some satisfaction to punish these false claimants—and punished they were—but this did not do much towards the clearing up of the difficulty. The King fumed, the Queen cried, the Court gossiped, the people wondered. Only the Princess seemed calm and unmoved. Indeed, if she had any feeling at all in the matter, it was one of satisfaction that she was not to be encumbered with a husband about whom she could not care an atom. She devoted her energies to tending her new treasure, which seemed to thrive amazingly and to look lovelier every day under her care.

Meanwhile, what of the page? Why did he not come forward and claim the bride for whom he had gone through so much? The reason was that he did not wish to buy the Princess—he wished to win her love, and he felt that merely having given her the rose would bring him no nearer to this end than he was before. He had tried to find the old country-woman again after his return, but all his inquiries had failed. There were plenty of old country-women with red cloaks about, and he went to see them all, but without success.

One morning, feeling rather restless, he got up early and went for a walk. He

took—he could not have said why—the way which led to the field in which he had encountered the Black Bull; and there, sitting on the stile, as though she was waiting for him, was the old country-woman.

"Good-morning, Sir Page," she cried as he drew near. "You are abroad early."

"I could not rest, good mother," replied the page. "Thanks to your help I have won for the Princess the golden rose. But I cannot claim her as my wife until she learns to love me, and that, alas! will never be."

"You are right," said the old woman. "Princess Cherry-blossom will never love you or any one else till her heart gets back to its right place. But mark this: he whose hand replaces the heart will win the love."

The page smiled sadly.

"That," he said, "makes my chances worse still. How can my hand replace the heart?"

"Listen to me," said the old woman. "You, Sir Page, are the master of the magic drop. If you can by some means cause the Princess to swallow it, she is yours. The best thing for you to do will be to obtain access to the Princess while she is asleep and slip the magic drop into her mouth. That is all you have to do. Stay, there is one thing more. Take with you a hammer, and crush to atoms that which falls from the lips of the Princess at the moment of her awaking. This you must do for my sake as well as for yours. Now farewell for the present. I will see you again when your task is accomplished and your prize is won."

The page wended his way home slowly, turning over in his mind how best to fulfil the old woman's behests. The best plan seemed to be for him to enter the Princess's room by her window at night, when all but the sentinels were asleep. He knew the window well. He had often watched it till daybreak, from the rose-garden, which, as I have said, it overlooked. A rose clambered up the face of the Palace wall and embowered the window with its white clusters; and the boughs, the page knew, were strong enough to bear him.

Waiting, therefore, till the stillest and darkest hour of the night, the page put his plan into execution. The room was dimly lighted, and he had little difficulty in finding where the Princess was sleeping. Stepping softly to her side he knelt down, and, placing the rose gently over her half-open mouth, shook the magic drop and made it fall between her lips. Princess Cherry-Blossom coughed, awoke, and sat up. As she did so something hard fell from her lips, struck the hand of the page, and bounded on to the floor. It was the withered cherry-stone. The page recalled the words of the old woman, and, seizing the hammer, with which he had been careful to provide himself, he crushed the stone to atoms. At that moment the room was flooded with light and the six fairy godmothers appeared. One of them stepped forward and, taking the page by the hand, said,—

"Sir Page, you don't remember me. I am the old country-woman in the red cloak. You have now slain the foul enchanter whom you encountered before in the form of a black bull, for his life was kept guarded in the withered cherry stone which you have crushed. He was in alliance with the seventh fairy. Her power ceases with his. In slaying him you have done good to me and my sisters, for he was the deadly enemy of our race. But you have done good to yourself as well. Turn and look."

The page turned and met the eyes of Princess Cherry-Blossom fixed upon him. What he read in them does not concern us. He never told anybody but the

Princess herself. It is enough to say that, whatever it was, it more than rewarded him for all his toil and trouble, and brought him on his knees by her side once more.

By this time the King and Queen and all the Court were aroused and had found their way into Cherry-Blossom's bedroom. The King was very sleepy, and required to have matters explained to him by the fairy godmothers three times before he understood them. When he fully grasped the situation he was delighted, and ordered that the marriage should take place the next day with the utmost magnificence. The Queen shed a great many tears, but they were tears of joy over the recovery of her dear daughter's love. For now that the withered cherry-stone was removed and the heart was beating in its right place, full power of loving had come back to the Princess, and she clasped her mother in her arms and kissed her again and again. The page and the Princess were married, as arranged, the next day, and never again had the people reason to speak of Princess Icicle.

E. P. Larken.

"Placing the rose gently over her half-open mouth

:: Lost Hearts ::

IT was, as far as I can ascertain, in September of the year 1811, that a post-chaise drew up before the door of Aswarby Hall, in the heart of Lincolnshire. The little boy, who was the only passenger in it, and who jumped out as soon as the chaise had stopped, looked about him with the keenest curiosity during the short interval that elapsed between the ringing of the bell and the opening of the hall door. He saw a tall, square, red-brick house, built in the reign of Anne; a stone-pillared porch had been added in the purer classical style of 1790; the windows of the house were many, tall, and narrow, with small panes and thick white woodwork. A pediment, pierced with a round window, crowned the front. There were wings to right and left, connected by curious glazed galleries, supported by colonnades, with the central block. These wings plainly contained the stables and offices of the house. Each was surmounted by an ornamental cupola with a gilded vane. An evening light shone on the building, making the window-panes glow like so many fires. Away from the Hall in front stretched a flat park studded with oaks and fringed with firs, which stood out against the sky. The clock in the church tower, buried in trees on the edge of the park—only its golden weathercock catching the light—was striking six, and the sound came gently beating down the wind. It was altogether a pleasant impression, though tinged with the sort of melancholy appropriate to an evening in early autumn, that was conveyed to the mind of the boy who was standing in the porch waiting for the door to open to him.

He had just come from Warwickshire, and was an orphan of some six months' standing now, owing to the generous and unexpected offer of his elderly cousin Mr. Abney, he had come to live at Aswarby. The offer was unexpected, because all who knew anything of Mr. Abney looked upon him as a somewhat austere recluse, into whose steady-going household the advent of a small boy would import a new and, it seemed, incongruous element. The truth is that very little was known of Mr. Abney's pursuits or temper. The Professor of Greek at Cambridge had been known to say that no one knew more of the religious beliefs of the later pagans than did the owner of Aswarby. Certainly the library at the Hall contained all the available literature of the Mysteries, the Orphic poems, the worship of Mithras, and the Neo-Platonists. In the marble-paved hall stood a fine group of Mithras slaying a Bull, which had been imported from the Levant at great expense by the owner. He had contributed a description of it to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and

"The little boy . . . looked about him with the keenest curiosity"

he had written a remarkable series of articles in the *Critical Museum* on the superstitions of the Romans of the Lower Empire He was looked upon, in fine, as a man wrapped up in his books, and it was a matter of great surprise among his neighbours that he should ever have heard of his orphan cousin Stephen Elliott, much more that he should have volunteered to make him an inmate of Aswarby Hall

Whatever may have been expected by his neighbours, it is certain that Mr. Abney, the tall, the thin, the austere, seemed inclined to give his young cousin a kindly reception. The moment the front door was opened he darted out of his study, rubbing his hands with delight.

"How are you, my boy? how are you? How old are you?" said he—"that is, you are not too much tired, I hope, by your journey to eat your supper?"

"No, thank you, sir," said Master Elliott, "I am pretty well."

"That's a good lad," said Mr. Abney. "And how old are you, my boy?" It seemed a little odd that he should have asked the question twice in the first two minutes of their acquaintance.

"I'm twelve years old next birthday, sir," said Stephen.

"And when is your birthday, my dear boy? Eleventh of September, eh? That's well—that's very well: nearly a year hence, isn't it? I like—ha, ha!—I like to get these things down in my book. Sure it's twelve?—certain?"

"Yes, quite sure, sir."

"Well, well: take him to Mrs. Bunch's room, Parkes, and let him have his tea—supper—whatever it is."

"Yes, sir," answered the staid Mr. Parkes; and conducted Stephen to the lower regions.

Mrs. Bunch was the most comfortable and human person whom Stephen had as yet met in Aswarby. She made him completely at home, and they were great friends after the first quarter of an hour—as indeed they continued. Mrs. Bunch had been born in the neighbourhood some fifty-five years before the date of Stephen's arrival, and her residence at the Hall was of twenty years' standing. Consequently, if any one knew the ins and outs of the house and the district, Mrs. Bunch knew them; and she was by no means disinclined to communicate her information. Certainly there were plenty of things about the Hall and the Hall gardens which Stephen, who was of an adventurous and inquiring turn, was anxious to have explained to him. "Who built the temple at the end of the laurel walk? Who was the old man whose picture hung on the staircase—sitting at a table with a skull under his hand?" These and many similar points were cleared up by the resources of Mrs. Bunch's powerful intellect. There were others, however, of which the explanations furnished were less satisfactory. One November evening Stephen was sitting by the fire in the housekeeper's room reflecting on his surroundings. "Is Mr. Abney a good man, and will he go to heaven?" he suddenly asked, with the peculiar confidence which children possess in the ability of their elders to settle these questions—the decision of which is believed to be reserved for other tribunals.

"Good?—bless the child!" said Mrs. Bunch. "Master's as kind a soul as ever I see! Didn't I never tell you of the little boy as he took in, out of the street, as you may say, this seven years back? and the little girl, two years after I first come here?"

"No; do tell me all about them, Mrs. Bunch—now this minute!"

"Well," said Mrs. Bunch, "the little girl I don't seem to recollect so much about. I know Master brought her back with him from his walk one day, and give orders to Mrs. Ellis, as was housekeeper then, as she should be took every care with. And the pore child hadn't no one belonging to her—she telled me so her own self; and here she lived with us a matter of three weeks it might be; and then, whether she were somethink of a gipsy in her blood or what not, but one morning she out of her bed afore any of us had opened a eye, and neither track nor yet trace of her have I set eyes on since. Master was wonderful put about, and had

"'Is Mr Abney a good man, and will he go to heaven?'"

all the ponds dragged but it's my belief she was had away by them gipsies, for there was singing round the house for as much as an hour the night she went, and Parkes he declares as he heard them a-calling in the woods all that afternoon. Dear, dear! an odd child she was, so silent in her ways and all; but I was wonderful taken up with her, so domesticated she was—surprising."

"And what about the little boy?" said Stephen.

"Ah, that pore boy!" sighed Mrs. Bunch. "He were a foreigner—Jevanny he called himself—and he came a-tweaking his urdy gurdy round and about the drive one winter day, and Master ad him in that minute, and ast all about where he came from, and how old he was, and how he made his way, and where was his relatives, and all as kind as heart could wish But it went the same way with him. They're a hunruly lot, them foreign nations, I do suppose, and he was off one fine morning just the same as the girl. Why he went and what he done was our question for as much as a year after: for he never took his urdy gurdy, and there it lays on the shelf."

The remainder of the evening was spent by Stephen in miscellaneous cross examination of Mrs. Bunch and in efforts to extract a tune from the hurdy gurdy

That night he had a curious dream At the end of the passage at the top of the house, in which his bedroom was situated, there was an old disused bothroom. It was kept locked, but the upper half of the door was glazed, and, since the muslin curtains which used to hang there had long been gone, you could look in and see the lead lined bath affixed to the wall on the right hand, with its head towards the window On the night of which I am speaking, Stephen Elliott found himself, as he thought, looking through the glazed door. The moon was shining through

the window, and he was gazing at a figure which lay in the bath. His description of what he saw reminds me of what I once beheld myself in the famous vaults of St. Michan's Church in Dublin, which possess the horrid property of preserving corpses from decay for centuries. A figure inexpressibly thin and pathetic, of a dusty leaden colour, enveloped in a shroud-like garment, the thin lips crooked into a faint and dreadful smile, the hands pressed tightly over the region of the heart. As he looked upon it, a distant, almost inaudible moan seemed to issue from its lips, and the arms began to stir. The terror of the sight forced Stephen backwards, and he awoke to the fact that he was indeed standing on the cold boarded floor of the passage in the full light of the moon. With a courage which I do not think can be common among boys of his age he went to the door of the bathroom to ascertain if the figure of his dream were really there. It was not, and he went back to bed. Mrs. Bunch was much impressed next morning by his story, and went so far as to replace the muslin curtain over the glazed door of the bathroom. Mr. Abney, moreover, to whom he confided his experiences at breakfast, was greatly interested, and made notes of the matter in what he called "his book."

The spring equinox was approaching, as Mr. Abney frequently reminded his young cousin, adding that this had been always considered by the ancients to be a critical time for the young that Stephen would do well to take care of himself, and to shut his bedroom window at night; and that Censorinus had some valuable remarks on the subject. Two incidents that occurred about this time made an impression upon Stephen's mind.

The first was after an unusually uneasy and oppressed night that he had passed—though he could not recall any particular dream that he had had.

The following evening Mrs. Bunch was occupying herself in mending his nightgown. "Gracious me, Master Stephen!" she broke forth, rather irritably, "how do you manage to tear your nightdress all to flinders this way? Look here, sir, what trouble you do give to poor servants that have to darn and mend after you!"

There was indeed a most destructive and apparently

"He went to the door of the bathroom to ascertain if the figure of his dream were really there

wantoo series of slits or scorings in the garment, which would undoubtedly require a skilful needle to make good. They were confined to the left side of the chest—long, parallel slits, about six inches in length, some of them not quite piercing the texture of the linen. Stephen could only express his entire ignorance of their origin: he was sure they were not there the night before. "But," he said, "Mrs. Bunch, they're just the same as the scratches on the outside of my bedroom door; and I'm sure I never had anything to do with making *them*."

Mrs. Bunch gazed at him open-mouthed, then snatched up a candle, departed hastily from the room, and was heard making her way upstairs. In a few minutes she came down. "Well," she said, "Master Stephen, it's a funny thing to me how them marks and scratches can a come there—too high up for any cat or dog to ave made 'em, much less a rat, for all the world like a Chinaman's finger nails, as my uncle in the tea trade used to tell us of when we was girls together. I wouldn't say nothink to Master, not if I was you, Master Stephen, my dear; and just turn the key of the door when you go to your bed."

"I always do, Mrs. Bunch, as soon as I've said my prayers."

"Ah, that's a good child: always say your prayers, and then no one can't hurt you."

Herewith Mrs. Bunch addressed herself to mending the injured nightgown, with intervals of meditation, until bed-time. This was on a Friday night in March 1812.

On the following evening the usual duet of Stephen and Mrs. Bunch was augmented by the sudden arrival of Mr. Parkes, the butler, who as a rule kept himself rather to himself in his own pantry. He did not see that Stephen was there: he was, moreover, flustered and less slow of speech than was his wont. "Master may get up his own wine, if he likes, of an evening," was his first remark. "Either I do it in the daytime or not at all, Mrs. Bunch. I don't know what it may be: very like it's the rats, or the wind got into the cellars, but I'm not so young as I was, and I can't go through with it as I have done."

"Well, Mr. Parkes, you know it is a surprising place for the rats, is the Hall."

"I'm not denying that, Mrs. Bunch; and, to be sure, many a time I've heard the tale from the men in the shipyards about the rat that could speak. I never laid no confidence in that before; but to-night, if I'd demeaned myself to lay my ear to the door of the further bin, I could pretty much have heard what they was saying."

"Oh, there, Mr. Parkes, I've no patience with your fancies! Rats talking in the wine-cellar, indeed!"

"Well, Mrs. Bunch, I've no wish to argue with you: all I say is, if you choose to go to the far bin, and lay your ear to the door, you may prove my words this minute."

"What nonsense you do talk, Mr. Parkes—not fit for children to listen to! Why, you'll be frightening Master Stephen there out of his wits."

"What! Master Stephen?" said Parkes, awaking to the consciousness of his presence. "Master Stephen knows well enough when I'm a playing a joke with you, Mrs. Bunch."

In fact, Master Stephen knew much too well to suppose that Mr. Parkes had in the first instance intended a joke. He was interested, not altogether pleasantly, in the situation, but all his questions were unsuccessful in inducing the butler to give any more detailed account of his experiences in the wine-cellar.

We have now arrived at March 24th, 1812. It was a day of curious experiences for Stephen, a windy, noisy day, which filled the house and the gardens with a restless impression. As Stephen stood by the fence of the grounds, and looked out

into the park, he felt as if an endless procession of unseen people were sweeping past him on the wind, borne on resistlessly and aimlessly, vainly striving to stop themselves, to catch at something that might arrest their flight and bring them once again into contact with the living world of which they had formed a part. After luncheon that day Mr Abney said "Stephen, my boy, do you think you could manage to come to me to-night as late as eleven o'clock in my study? I shall be busy until that time, and I wish to show you something connected with your future life which it is most important that you should know. You are not to mention this matter to Mrs. Bunch nor to any one else in the house, and you had better go to your room at the usual time."

"Stephen was standing at the open window of his bedroom"

Here was a new excitement added to life. Stephen eagerly grasped at the opportunity of sitting up till eleven o'clock. He looked in at the library door on his way upstairs that evening, and saw a brazier, which he had often noticed in the corner of the room, moved out before the fire, an old silver-gilt cup stood on the table, filled with red wine, and some written sheets of paper lay near it. Mr Abney was sprinkling some incense on the brazier from a round silver box as Stephen passed, but did not seem to notice his step.

The wind had fallen, and there was a still night and a full moon At about ten o'clock Stephen was standing at the open window of his bedroom looking out over the country. Still as the night was, the mysterious population of the distant moonlit woods was not yet lulled to rest From time to time strange cries as of lost and despairing wanderers sounded from across the mere. They might be the notes of owls or water birds, yet they did not quite resemble either sound. Were not they coming nearer? Now they sounded from the nearer side of the water, and in a few moments they seemed to be floating about among the shrubberies. Then they ceased; but just as Stephen was thinking of shutting the window and resuming his reading of Robinson Crusoe, he caught sight of two figures standing on the gravelled terrace that ran along the garden side of the Hall—two figures of a boy and girl, as it seemed they stood side by side, looking up at the windows. Something in the form of the girl recalled irresistibly his dream of the figure in

the bath The boy inspired him with more acute fear Whilst the girl stood still, half smiling, with her hands clasped over her heart, the boy, a thin shape, with black hair and ragged clothing, raised his arms in the air with an appearance of menace and of unappeasable hunger and longing. The moon shone upon his almost transparent hands, and Stephen saw that his nails were fearfully long and that the light shone through them As he stood with his arms thus raised, he disclosed a terrifying spectacle On the left side of his chest there opened a black and gaping rent; and there fell upon Stephen's brain, rather than upon his ear, the impression of one of those hungry and desolate cries that he had heard resounding over the woods of Aswarby all that evening In another moment this dreadful pair had moved swiftly and noiselessly over the dry gravel, and he saw them no more. Inexpressibly frightened as he was, he determined to take his candle and go down to Mr Abney's study, for the hour appointed for their meeting was near at hand. The study or library opened out of the front hall on one side; and Stephen, urged on by his terrors, did not take long in getting there. To effect an entrance was not so easy It was not locked, he felt sure, for the key was on the outside of the door as usual His repeated knocks produced no answer. Mr Abney was engaged he was speaking What? why did he try to cry out? and why was the cry choked in his throat? Had he, too, seen the mysterious children who were tracking their prey round that house of terrors? But now everything was quiet, and the door yielded to Stephen's terrified and frantic pushing He did not come to himself for many hours after he had looked in.

On the table in Mr Abney's study certain papers were found which explained the situation to Stephen Elliott when he was of an age to understand them The most important sentences were as follows:—

"It was a belief very strongly and generally held by the ancients—of whose wisdom in these matters I have had such experience as induces me to place confidence in their assertions—that by enacting certain processes, which to us moderns have something of a barbaric complexion, a very remarkable enlightenment of the spiritual faculties in man may be attained: that, for example, by absorbing the personalities of a certain number of his fellow-creatures, an individual may gain a complete ascendency over those orders of spiritual beings which control the elemental forces of our universe. It is recorded of Simon Magus that he was able to fly in the air, to become invisible, or to assume any form he pleased, by the agency of the soul of a boy whom, to use the libellous phrase employed by the author of the *Clementine Recognitions*, he had 'murdered' I find it set down, moreover, with considerable detail in the writings of Hermes Trismegistus that similar happy results may be produced by the absorption of the hearts of not less than three human beings below the age of twenty-one years. To the testing of the truth of this receipt I have devoted the greater part of the last twenty years, selecting as the *corpora vilia* of my experiment such persons as could conveniently be removed without occasioning a sensible gap in society The first step I effected by the removal of one Phœbe Stanley, a girl of gipsy extraction, on March 24th, 1792. The second, by the removal of a wandering Italian lad, named Giovanni Paoli, on the night of March 23rd, 1805 The final 'victim'—to employ a word repugnant in the highest degree to my feelings—must be my cousin, Stephen Elliott. His day must be this March 24th, 1812

"The best means of effecting the required absorption is to remove the heart from the *living* subject, to reduce it to ashes, and to mingle them with about a pint of some red wine, preferably port The remains of the first two subjects, at

"Mr. Abney was found in his chair, his head thrown back."

least, it will be well to conceal: a disused bathroom or wine-cellar will be found convenient for such a purpose. Some annoyance may be experienced from the psychic portion of the subjects—which popular language dignifies with the name of ghosts. But the man of philosophic temperament—to whom alone the experiment is appropriate—will be little prone to attach importance to the feeble efforts of these beings to wreak their vengeance on him. I contemplate with the liveliest satisfaction the enlarged and emancipated existence which the experiment, if successful, will confer on me; not only placing me beyond the reach of human justice, but eliminating to a great extent the prospect of death itself."

Mr. Abney was found in his chair, his head thrown back, his face stamped with an expression of rage, fright, and mortal pain. In his left side was a terrible lacerated wound, exposing the heart. There was no blood on his hands, and a long knife that lay on the table was perfectly clean. A savage wild cat might have inflicted the injuries. The window of the study was open, and it was the opinion of the coroner that Mr. Abney had met his death by the agency of some wild creature. But Stephen Elliott's study of the papers I have quoted led him to a very different conclusion.

MONTAGUE JAMES.

THE LEGEND OF THE NAUTILUS.

ONG, long ago, when people were not nearly so wise as they are now-a-days—when they did not know how many millions of miles away the sun is, but firmly believed the moon to be made of green cheese—there lived a little child—a happy little child, that awoke with the dawn, played all day, and slept all night, just as happy little children ought to do, no matter how wise the world becomes.

Now, when it was quite a wee baby, it went to bed so early that it did not know what darkness meant, and used to think people were talking nonsense when they spoke of the silent night. But as it grew older, it naturally became less sleepy and sat up later, until the shadows lengthened, the daylight faded and the red sun dipped down behind the trees. And at last it sat up so late that it saw the grey twilight creep over the world. And then, one bed-time, the dark mantle of night enfolded the flowers and birds and the little wondering child.

At first it was frightened and hid its eyes, but after a time it forgot to be afraid, and began, as children will, to ask questions. It would watch with wide open, puzzled eyes, until the last glamour had gone from the sky, and then it would turn to its mother and say:

"Mother! What becomes of the Light when the Sun goes out?"

But the mother only laughed, and bade it not be silly. So it sat silent; but for all that it kept on wondering, till its little head ached, where the Light went when the Sun goes out.

"It would watch . . . . until the last glamour had gone from the sky"

It asked the Fire, thinking that would be sure to know, as it went out often, and had, besides, a nice ruddy light of its own; but it laughed also, and said it didn't know, and didn't care, since the light always came back when it was wanted. The candle suggested it might go into the snuffers; but the chimney declared it knew nothing, unless the Light hid in the smoke.

"The Sun has no smoke," said the child, shaking its head. "I'll ask the Sun flower. It must know, since it follows the Sun all day."

"Redder and redder grew the sky"

"What becomes of the Light when the Sun goes out?" echoed the Sunflower, tossing its head in a superior way: "why, what a little stupid you are! The Sun never goes out. It goes to another place, and comes back next morning"

"I know that," persisted the child; "but it is the Light, not the Sun. Look at that yellow light on the wall. See how it creeps up and up. By-and-by it will climb into the western sky and disappear. Where does *it* go?"

"Nowhere!" cried the Sunflower in a pet. "that is the stupidest question I ever heard The Light is nothing"

"Sleep whispered dreams as a lullaby."

Just at that moment, however, it left her face, and she had to turn her head to follow it, so the conversation came to an end

But the child sat thinking, and this is what it thought: "If the Sunflower follows the Light, it must go somewhere."

So that night, as it lay cosy in its little bed, the child plucked up courage to ask the Moon, which peeped in upon it kindly through the window.

"What becomes of the Light when the Sun goes out?" echoed the Moon, surprised. Why, it stays, of course. Don't you see it in my face?"

"Is that sunlight?" asked the child doubtfully "it looks so cold and pale."

"Come up here and feel how warm it is," retorted the Moon scornfully. "I can't help your having bat's eyes. I can see it quite plain"

Now, in those days children generally believed what they were told; so the child lay satisfied, telling itself it knew where the Light went at last, and wishing it had not bat's eyes, when all of a sudden something dark began to creep over the edge of the Moon.

"Is there anything the matter, Moon?" it asked anxiously. "It looks as though the Light were going."

"Nothing! nothing!" cried the Moon hurriedly: "you are in the way—that is all"

But the shadow grew and grew till at last the Moon hung like a dark ball in the heavens; and though the Light came back again quickly the child was no longer satisfied, but lay wondering where the Light went when it left the Moon.

So the next day, when it sat watching the Sun dip down behind the trees, it made up its mind to follow the Sun as far as it could, and find out what became of the Light when it went out.

It unlatched the garden gate and ran swiftly down the dusty road, startling the sleepy birds from their nests in the tall hedges, until it came to a forest, where it could only see a glint here and there through the grey gnarled trees. Redder and redder grew the sky, till, as the child came out upon a rising moor stretching into the blue distance, the Sun was close to the horizon.

"I shall be too late! I shall be too late!" cried the child breathlessly, as it ran heedless of stones and briers. The Light faded from the heather and crept up the little figure with its outstretched hands and backward-streaming hair: on and on it ran, with the sunset glow upon its flushed face.

'There the spirit of the little child still lives.'

"Stay! Please stay one moment, dear Sun," it pleaded, but in vain. The last gleam died away, and, wearied out with fatigue and disappointment, the child stumbled and fell. But kind Night, who is always so good to the tired children, took the little wanderer in her arms, and Sleep whispered dreams as a lullaby, till Dawn

peeping from the east awoke the child. And there was the Light once more claiming the world for its own.

All that day the little traveller travelled from east to west, and answered hopefully to the passers by: "I am going, good people, to find out what becomes of the Light when the Sun goes out—that is all."

But when Night came it was no nearer the horizon than before.

So, day after day, the child sped on, till wearied and flushed it arrived at last upon the shore of the sea just as the sun was setting. And lo! a bright ray of rippled light stretched from the horizon, and, ever widening, touched the child's tired feet as it hurried to the brink.

"It is the road at last!" it cried exultantly—"the road to Nowhere."

So saying, it ran on and on into the sea, careless of the increasing depth. Then the pitying waves took the little wanderer in their cold hands and laid the child back softly on the beach.

"Go home, baby," they said: "the big ocean is not for such as you."

"But I only want to find out what becomes of the Light when the Sun goes out," pleaded the child. "Perhaps you can tell me."

"Not we!" laughed the waves. "It leaves us and goes somewhere else, though we stretch right over the edge of the world."

"Perhaps the Sunflower was right after all, and it goes nowhere," thought the child. "I must find out where Nowhere is. I will not go back to wonder and wonder and wonder all my life long."

So it gathered the shells on the shore—shells that glinted and glowed with many hues, shells that were the tempest's spoil from the quiet depths of the ocean—and bound them together with strands of seaweed until a fragile raft floated on the water.

"Do not tempt us! Do not tempt us!" blabbed the little waves; but the child took no heed and pushed out boldly from the shore. Then the waves laughed kindly. "It is a brave child," they said, "and the raft is pretty!" So they let it float on the path of the Light, and even the wind caught the child's outstretched arms and streaming hair, and wafted the little seeker from the shore. And the Sun sank slowly through the golden sky to the golden horizon.

"I shall be in time to-day," cried the child joyfully, "for the Light is close on the path beside me."

But even as it spoke the great yellow orb touched the horizon and lay for one instant reflected in the rippling waves, the next it sank—sank—sank!

Then, with a cry—"Oh, wait! please wait!"—the little child sprang from the raft of shells and followed the Sun on the road to Nowhere!

The kind waves carried it to the quiet world in the depth of the sea, where there is no voice, no sound, and the Light shines dim through the changeful currents above.

And there the spirit of the little child still lives and wonders, as it wondered before, whither the Light goes. So, every now and again, when the dainty Nautilus rises through the blue water sky to unfurl its purple sails in this world of ours, the spirit of the little seeker begs for a place in the pearly boat, so that it may try once more to see what becomes of the Light when the Sun goes out.

And that is why the Nautilus is generally seen drifting with all sails set along the ray of rippling Light which stretches over the sunset sea from the land of Nowhere.

F. A. Steel.

BRABANTIO'S LOVE.

WHEN Desdemona and the Moor had taken their abrupt departure, the silence of Brabantio's stately palace smote him to the heart. A year passed, and then came news of the tragedy at Cyprus. Othello and Desdemona were in their graves, and vexed him no more. He was alone in the world now, with his life half played. The emptiness of politics and pageant and intrigue weighed on him as a yoke, and he marvelled how many masters were set over the Doge of Venice. Suddenly—at the age of fifty, a widower and childless—a subtle yet masterful flame kindled, and filled him with the witchery of its inspiration. He longed, with an infinite and passionate longing, for the pure and mystical love of a beautiful woman.

He was a fine looking man, blest with the health that comes of an active life and abstemious habit; for the end of the fifteenth century was the prime of Venice, and there was neither sloth nor debauchery within her. His eyes were still as brilliant as in

the days of his exuberant youth, when they first rested upon the fair face of Desdemona's mother; his voice was pleasantly modulated to the soft Venetian speech, and if the lines on his brow were deepening, they were but as the lengthening shadows of a summer's day that has been soulful and sweet. It was in vain to brood upon the bygone and the lost, and he solaced himself with the reflection that the joy of life had not yet been wholly emptied.

In the course of his fifty years he had learned several useful things. He had come to understand that the opinion of the world is no better than a gossiping beldame; that human knowledge is honeycombed with snares and pitfalls for the unwary, that man is plagued with curious accidents and coincidences that cheat the rarest ingenuity and baffle the keenest calculation; that the monotony of life is occasionally rent by dazzling events, often necessarily kept secret, of such extreme improbability that their occurrence astounds the mind. He cherished his religion as truth; he valued gold as power; it was because he believed in himself and knew his own purpose that he made his way. But, more than all these, he trusted in the fascinating and forbidden art of Almodoro the magician.

This Almodoro has left a strange fame in the annals of Venice. In the fifteenth century he was reported to be no other than Giacomo Contarini, who had been Doge of Venice half a dozen generations before, and to whose portrait he bore an astonishing resemblance. Men who had seen him went to look at the picture in the Doge's Palace, and found it Almodoro's face: the meeting eyebrows, the furtive look of the eyes, the sad, set expression of the lips, even the threads of grey hair above the left temple—all were there; and it was remembered that no man could bear witness to the death of Contarini, who had resigned his office and left Venice, and whom rumour declared to have been wandering ever since. Even the dullest could read the devil's blessing on that handsome face that never grew old; and the children, when they saw a withered leaf near him move and rustle, though not a breath stirred, knew that the feet of familiar spirits were not far. Many wondered that the Church laid not her heavy hand upon him; but he stood in such high favour that perhaps she durst not. Some said none could lay physical hold upon him, and that he could only be scourged with ghostly stripes. It was averred that once in Rome, some years before, he was commanded to be seized one night by a multitude of priests and friars and halberdiers. Arrived at his house, they ascended the stairs in a body, with swords and flambeaux and holy water and exorcisms and the clattering of many sandals, till they reached a great gallery, from whose dim distance came a shuffling of limping footsteps, and they caught sight of the semblance of a lame old man in clerical habit, looking back with frightened face. It was Monsignor Pasquale, who was lame all his life, who had been dead twenty years, and whose life-size portrait hung on the wall. The friars raised a hue-and-cry at the sight, and rushed after him like a rolling wave. But a captain of the guard who had known the Monsignor turned instinctively to scan his portrait, and a chill crept over him on discovering that a different personage filled the picture. The wrinkled visage was replaced by a beautiful and intellectual head—the head of Almodoro, and his body was robed in the magnificent garb of the Doge Giacomo Contarini. The wizard had thrust the aged and infirm prelate from his place, and had substituted himself upon the board—himself as he was a century before. And when the monks and soldiers were weary with chasing shadows they went their ways; and lo! next morning Almodoro's image had vanished and the Monsignor's had slunk back to its place.

The magician had made a great name for himself in Venice, and in the popular

diction it was said of him that he could "rend the veil of the future in twain" He had indeed grown adept in reading thoughts, and callous to the vices and crimes with which every land brought him in contact. Not desire for money alone determined his co-operation with the *clientèle* which sought him. More potent motives were love of that power which the astute hold over the credulous, and an enjoyment in the skilful application of his circuitous methods—similar somewhat to the zest of a mathematician in the solution of a problem, or the satisfaction of an inventor in the exercise of his gifts. Occasionally some critical issue, some complicated situation was confided to his judgment, with rich results in prospect and knotty entanglements about the execution, and then it was that he laboured patiently and with refinement of elaboration to group circumstances and determine time and fix the opportunity and secure concealment, till in his eyes his perfected scheme seemed an artistic masterpiece

It was to this worthy that Brabantio had betaken himself for guidance after Desdemona's flight; and who shall say how far the wizard's charms and spells may have operated to bring about the sanguinary ruin which presently involved both the Moor and his ill-fated bride? It was again to Almodoro that he had recourse now, with a stranger proposal on his lips than the conjurer was often wont to hear

"Every summer," he began, "Venice, passing down the steps of Time, bathes her feet in the Adriatic, and her Doge, in all the pomp and splendour of his office, is wedded to the glistening sea. Nevertheless it is, at the best, a halting espousal, and it rings in my thoughts to perfect this ephemeral marriage and to make it a reality."

The alchemist, who in his day had encountered many forms of madness, listened with unruffled calm. "Nothing will be easier," he answered, "if you, master, will but indicate the way."

"There are some rocks in the sea near Amalfi," said Brabantio, speaking with intense emotion, "called the Siren Islands, and famous since the days of Ulysses.

If you sail about them, as I have done, you can see the bold face of the cliffs catching the flushes of dawn, and the waves dashing in and tossing the spray aloft like a banner. 'Tis there the Sirens lurk far down in the deep-sea caves, or bask in the sunshine on the water. Few men have ever obtained more than a distant peep at them; and your task, Almodoro, will be to catch one and bring her alive to Venice. Shall I not then in very sooth be wedded to the sea, and will you not be well rewarded if I pay you her weight in ducats!"

A month later the Doge was summoned to Almodoro's house, and hastened thither in breathless impatience. He went at night in strict incognito, in a plain gondola with only two rowers. The conjurer received him in a small room which ordinarily served as a retired nook for meditation.

"Is she here?" asked Brabantio softly, casting his eyes eagerly about, as soon as they were alone

"No, she is upstairs awaiting you in the arbour."

"Dhavolo! how did you snare her, O marvellous man?"

"The difficulty was to get within speaking distance That gained, and one of them listening, I offered her the only faculty she had not. These Sirens already possess most of the things my art can bestow—perpetual youth, changeless beauty, fascination upon whoever sees them And so I tempted her with an extraordinary lure—the gift to renew and rekindle the pleasures and memories and loves of the past"

"And her name . . . if she has one?"

"Her name is Margiana 'sea-duck,' it means."

"And is she beautiful?"

"It is not for me, who am dead to woman's beauty and to love, to say. But follow me, and you shall see."

In the corner of a tiny garden, built upon a colonnade, and overlooking the Grand Canal, reclined the Siren. She was attired in a flowing gown, and her hair was carelessly bound in a coil, through which, in Venetian fashion, she had thrust a slender stiletto Above her were trellised lilac bushes that touched the Maytime with fragrance; and at her feet, in a metal vase, burned a spiced concoction whose flame brightened with prismatic tints. The Doge started, and crossed himself and clasped his hands at sight of her rare and subtly smiling countenance. Even the imperturbable Almodoro turned to look back upon him with triumph There before them was the matchless colour the fair weather of ages had laid on her cheeks, and the violet green her eyes had caught from the sparkling brine There was the shapely neck and the statuesquely graceful figure, and the lithe symmetry that ended her strange body in the contour of a dolphin To Brabantio it seemed that he looked less upon a material figure than upon some day-dream of his youth revived and restored to him, after all these years, from the dazzling sea of all his life's desire

He advanced, and, taking her hand, would have raised it to his lips in amorous salutation But the strange being snatched it away with a malicious laugh, and spoke in a soft low voice that differed from any human accents

"Beware!" she cried "know you not the fate that awaits the mortal whose spirit is touched with the love of a Siren?"

"Yes," answered the Doge, seating himself, "these loves that God and man forbid cast a shadow over the soul They are a blemish upon the mortal spirit, obscuring even its perception of right and wrong The conscience becomes like a

mirror that has been breathed upon and that reflects no more. And yet—though I behold you now for the first time—yet have I loved you so long that nothing can change my purpose to make you my wife. And though it should be at the risk of my immortal being, yet shall our lives and fates be joined."

"I shall make you an ill-chosen mate—and an unwilling one at that. Do you suppose I can forgive the lure with which this strange man snared me, or that I who was born and have lived in the slumberous majesty of the deep sea can endure the empty foolishness you mortals call life, or that there is a single pulse in the feeble fibre of your love that could beat in unison with a tremendous passion?"

"Yes," interposed Almodoro, who had listened to the words they exchanged, "it is not beyond the power of my art to strike where the heartstrings beat. You shall bathe in the foam of the sea; you shall have perfumes distilled from flowers that bloomed in Elysium; you shall be thrilled with music as sweet as any you remember, and in this man's great love you shall find a passion equal to any you have ever known."

"And your love, Almodoro," asked the strange creature, with the untutored frankness of a savage, "shall I have your love too?"

"That were my death," gravely replied the alchemist. "I have already told you that love is the infirmity which in its essence holds the poison of decay. Only through complete self-conquest, which is the extinguishment of every earthly affection, can the forces of Nature be arrested."

"And shall you, then, never die?"

"Who knows," answered Almodoro pensively, "or who shall say that some dross of humanity, some particle of human love might not one day contaminate me and draw me from things spiritual and immortal to things earthly, all of which are touched by death?"

"But," interrupted Brabantio, taking Marigiana's hand, "I shall permit you only one love, and that mine own. Moreover, you shall be the bride of Venice, and all will do homage to you, for will not each see in you the incarnation of the Adriatic at last and in very truth espoused?"

Their talk turned presently upon lighter themes, and ere long Brabantio bade his affianced as tender a good-night as her obdurate reserve permitted. When they were alone Almodoro raised her in his arms, and carried her lightly across the garden to the place where the bed she desired—a great bundle of fresh-cut grass—had been laid beneath the stars. Her face was near his, her arms were about his shoulders, a subtle fragrance of sea-anemones lingered in her hair,—suddenly she bent nearer as though to press his lips with hers. But the magician forced her brusquely from him upon her couch, and left her without a word. He knew, and laughed softly at the thought, that womanlike she craved the one thing impossible for her to possess—the love of a man who had put all love away for ever. Oddly enough, she laughed too when she was alone, a rippling, mocking laughter, and murmured, as she composed herself to sleep: "Could there be a sweeter death than to breathe one's last in a kiss!"

The next morning Brabantio was seated in his study with a handful of unopened despatches and reports before him. Senators and admirals waited in his ante-chamber, or went away; but presently Almodoro came, and was instantly admitted.

"She is well—quite well," he replied, in answer to a dozen eager questions, "and you shall wed her as soon as you please." Then, seating himself in a great carved

chair near the Doge's table, he said, with a clear, logical perception that was no small part of his magic: "We have to appeal to this queer being through the same emotional forces by which the feminine mind is usually influenced. I move her vanity by holding before her gaze the lofty station of *Dogaressa*. I touch a string that vibrates through her entire Past when I speak of a phantom love I have discovered crossing her line of the heart at a bygone—possibly a remote period. I intend to evoke that phantom, believing that through it I shall control her, as a woman is often governed by the memory of a passion which, though dead, is still cherished."

"But to awaken this ancient flame may be infinitely to my disadvantage," musingly objected Brabantio.

"Not if it be presented in such guise as to give a startling shock to the treasured memory. Suppose, for example, a woman who broods upon her absent lover could by some spell be shown a presentment of him in the embrace of another."

"And your spells can do all that and more, none knows better than I. You will present to her the scenes with which she was familiar years, years ago, on many a well-remembered day, and lead her through an hour of soft and infinitely sweet emotion to a new awakening—a torch kindled in the twilight."

"All this you shall see to-night," assented the alchemist. "and you shall be married to-morrow, and take her, if you will," he added, with a slightly sarcastic inflection, "to the groves where the wild doves are cooing."

That evening, through the languorous dusk, Brabantio's gondola bore him secretly as before to the house of Almodoro. The Grand Canal was brilliant with coloured lights, and from a gondola that rested with idle oars before a palace came the sound of exquisite music, the tinkling cadences of mandolins, the thrumming of the guitar of Castile and the vibrant voice of a lover.

"How divinely will she sing to me, on many a summer's morning!" thought the

Doge—"she who has listened to the harmonies of the waves and caught the whispered meaning of the breeze" And when, a moment later, he stood by her side, he addressed her with the impassioned fervour of a young lover, and of one emboldened by the consciousness that superhuman agencies are enlisted in his aid And now, to his delight, the Siren lifted her bright eyes to his and did not withdraw her hand.

"Let us forget the past," he murmured, "with its remote and short-lived days Cannot you see with me in the future the radiant embodiment of our transfigured lives?"

"Alas!" exclaimed the nymph, "you will not understand that I love not you, but Almodoro. I am no woman to be a housewife and wear fine gowns and heed your gala days and pageants. For me the infinite repose of silence, and the sun springing up from the solitude of the sea, and my white body fairer than silks or satins, and the secrets of all Time whereof I sing, and such strange passionate ardours as the sun-god teaches I do not more than half love Almodoro either, but he has a sort of fascination for me – because I cannot understand him or his ways."

Their colloquy was interrupted by the approach of Almodoro He had received the Doge in a large room that occupied half the lower floor of his house, and having seen to the closing of the shutters, now directed their attention to a gauze curtain which hung at the extremity of the room farthest from where they were seated. He placed himself by the side of Marigiana, who reclined on an Oriental divan, and addressing himself equally to her and to Brabantio, spoke to them in brief, straightforward words

"We all know," he began, "that sometimes a friendship or companionship, such as we frequently see about us, is continued on earth for years after one of those who shared it is physically no more. Such a survival, when complete and perfect, is rare It depends for its existence upon the ethereal or refined quality of our nature—for the flesh contaminates the spiritual being in life, and may wholly extinguish it. It survived so strongly in Lazarus as to triumph even over the grave Without stopping to enumerate other such instances, I will tell you that I am about to revive behind that gauze the semblance of one who loved Marigiana many centuries ago, and who seems to have exercised a preponderating influence upon her nature and her destiny ever since.

The magician had kindled in a basin behind the screen some substance which now emitted a light film of pungent smoke, obscuring the other end of the room. The gauze, however, about which it wreathed itself, assumed a brighter appearance, seemingly catching from some unseen flame a sparkling and iridescent and crystalline light and colour.

"That," murmured the seer, regarding it with fixed attention, "is the veil of the Past, when we have seen what it discloses, I will part for you the curtain of the Future."

They had not long to wait ere the prismatic tints assumed the semblance of a marine view of transcendent beauty. There were the dazzling splendour of the amaranth-tinted Adriatic and the liquid yellow of the familiar horizon The eye looked across orange groves and trellised honeysuckle, and out upon the rippling sparkle of the sunshine and the sea.

Suddenly against the vapoury film uprose the figure of a large and powerful man There was nothing peculiar in his Venetian costume, and from the hesitation of his mien he seemed perplexed and undecided He peered anxiously towards where they

sat at the dim unlighted extremity of the room, and stood waiting in motionless expectancy, while they regarded him with breathless interest Here, at last, thought Brabantio, is the mortal enemy—that ancient lover who ages ago taught Marigiana the caresses of first love, and tasted her lips and held her in his embrace This was the spectre that baffled all her new desires at their inception, who would dispute her possession now—even with the Doge of Venice and Almodoro And, gazing from this figure, which was said to feel neither change nor decay, to Marigiana, whom Nature had willed to be ever beautiful and young, it seemed to him that, by some strange mirage of imagination, the brief span of his own life—with its vicissitudes and griefs, its remote infancy, and its fading vista of friendships and ambitions—had been as lengthy as the fabled existences before him.

His thoughts were recalled from these musings by the singular agitation which the apparition produced upon Almodoro, by whom it was evidently unexpected. But upon the Siren the effect was still more decisive. The subtle perception of her senses—finer than that of an ordinary woman, finer than that of any man, even though he were a wizard of the purest fibre—instantly detected that the presence before them was that, not of a spectre, but of a living man and an enemy

"Look to yourself, magician!" she exclaimed; then, swiftly checking herself, "No," she whispered—"it is the Doge he threatens: it is an assassin, a *spadassino*, you have evoked!"

At these significant words the apparition brusquely dashed aside the curtain, having evidently derived his resolve from Marigiana's utterance. A hasty stride—a bound—and he was upon them, stiletto in hand

But Brabantio could be upon occasion a cool and self-reliant soldier, accustomed to the tragic surprises and contingencies of Italian life in the Quattro Cento. The personal identity of the spectre was no longer a mystery to him, for he drew his poniard, and, with a cry of rage, sprang forward They were no ill-matched pair of gladiators, these two, thought Marigiana, who had witnessed sea-fights and knew how brave men die. Only a breathless instant's pause, then each spasmodically clutched the other's left hand, and the stilettos flashed free, only a breathless instant's pause, and then but one blow descended, for Almodoro, springing forward, caught the stranger's blade and wrenched it from his grasp

"It is Tryphonius, the Cypriote," said Brabantio, wiping his dripping stiletto, and gazing at his prostrate assailant as though he would fain have despatched him

And as he spoke, Marigiana, without the restraint of a maiden coyness, which perhaps was not in her nature, threw her arms about the magician's neck and kissed him. She knew only how to act as instinct prompted, upon the impulse of the moment, and in alarm and danger turned as naturally to him and to the curious fascination he exercised over her as in the open sea, in a moment of fright or peril, she might instinctively have sought one of her half-human mates.

Taken thus suddenly at unawares, the magician yielded himself for a single delirious instant to the thrilling sweetness of the beautiful mermaid's embrace Her lips were upon his but for a second, then in a frenzy he cast her off

But the effect upon Almodoro of that tremulous lapse from ascetic virtue, that first insidious and half involuntary deviation from the severe self denial of a lifetime, was appalling He aged thirty years in as many seconds In a single instant all the conquered forces and passions of his nature, all the sympathies and emotions he had denied, all the enslaved cravings and imaginings of his mind, rose in tumultuous revolt and overwhelmed the principle of supreme self-mastery to which he owed his intellectual dominion. The youthful appearance, whereof he boasted

that it was changeless, vanished, and his face seemed to shrivel as though Nature were exacting the instantaneous payment of the accumulated debt of centuries. With inflexible patience he had subjugated the earthly elements of his being to the spiritual and immortal principle of his divine soul. He had succeeded, for had he not held death and infirmity at bay? He had failed, because a breath of morbid passion in the form of an unsuspected and involuntary sympathy with this strange being, and a spasmodic response to the love she offered, had stolen unawares within his citadel. In this, it may be, lay the secret of his precipitate fall,—that it was not the love of woman that had tempted him, but the allurement of an idea at first bewildering and incomprehensible. He knew that the elaborate tyranny of an absolute will was wrecked, and realised that life—the life so long held in complete suspense and lifted above the mutability of time—was ebbing from him as from an open wound. Marigiana, aghast at what she had done, and not comprehending the cause of the alchemist's distress, sought to enfold him again; but, raising himself from the divan upon which he had sunk, he motioned her away with abhorrence.

"I am dying," he whispered to the Doge, with white and quivering lips. "I shall be dead in a few moments unless the perfect and absolute life-essence be given me."

"And what is that? and where am I to find it?" exclaimed Brabantio, who had caught Almodoro's cold hands in his, and stood looking in his face with the wildest terror.

"About my neck—a crystal. Crush it, and give me its essence upon my lips."

The Doge was not wholly unversed in alchemy, and knew the effect that could be produced by this strange prescription. He hastily took from the wizard's neck an amulet, in which was a crystal wherein could be discerned a tiny drop of water. The thought possessed him that here was the primeval element of life, of the mist that ascended beneath the warmth of the sunshine of the day of creation, or of the dew that fell on the night that followed. The black art taught that it was free from the contamination of man, that death was unknown when it became enclosed in its little recess, and that even after the lapse of ages it might still retain something of the essence of life. He crushed it beneath the hilt of his stiletto, and held the fragments to Almodoro's lips, where a particle of their moisture rested. The effect was electrical: the alchemist's breath returned; his pallor lessened; his eyes recovered their usual expression, and rested upon Marigiana, standing beside the great doorway she had thrown open at the edge of the Grand Canal.

She had cast off the gown with which civilisation had robed her, and stood looking back upon him tenderly and longingly, as perhaps she may have gazed upon Andromeda, in the superb nudity of uncovered shoulders and bosom, and of lithe, strong arms clinging to the sculptured door, with the lower part of her body tapering away to the green and scaly and dolphin-shaped fins that supported her. It was his last look at his first and only love; and as she plunged head foremost into the black water of the Canal and disappeared, it seemed to him that so extraordinary a semblance could not actually have existed, and that it must have been only a vagary of the intellect, an accidental discord of an overwrought mind. But possibly the reverse was nearer truth, and it may be that in the web of sophistry and the perversion of nature in which the alchemist had spent so long a lifetime his encounter with the sea-nymph was one of the few

realities. So nearly does the channel of curious arts resemble the course of everyday knowledge, that the mind, like the senses, cannot invariably determine between the actual and the visionary

Unfortunately there was not a second crystal available for Brabantio, to whom the shock and chagrin of the Siren's escape proved fatal. He sought her eagerly for days in the *Bucentoro*, out upon the Adriatic, saying ever and again, "When she sees me with the nuptial ring and having on a wedding garment, she will come," and crying, "She is there!" where a shining ripple touched the lagoon a mile away. But these declarations presently gave place to delirium, and he pined for the sake of the mermaid's face that had entranced him for an hour, and of the extraordinary and phenomenal passion that had illumined his life for a day.

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.

SONNET.

ONCE, when late Spring had thrown her hyacinth blue
O'er every glen and gully of the wood,
Near where the sea makes endless solitude,
I walked with one loved a whole lifetime thro';
Whom grief had tried and years attested true.
"Many," I thought, "are dear, half understood;
But only here I find sweet certitude,
The one I *know*, in heart and spirit,—You."

Then, in the deep wood where she stood with me,
Where fir and bracken skirt the long sand shore,
I saw her eyes; grey storm and a great blue calm.
The sun struck sudden thro' the dark pine's arm:
The sea moaned, and I knew I stood before
A mystery eternal as the sea

NESTA LAKE.

THE PRACTICAL MAHATMA.

I WAS young, in perfect health, broad-shouldered and athletic, an art student, and in Paris. I imagine that I must have been very happy, though I was undoubtedly painfully short of money. The latter circumstance compelled me to dine at a cheap restaurant in the Latin Quarter, where the food was of doubtful origin and the wine a shameless impertinence. I was surprised one evening, when I was dining in my small way, to find two Americans sitting at a table next to the one which I always occupied. They were evidently not art students, and their appearance did not indicate that they were in financial difficulties. Why in these circumstances they should patronise Mère Picard's restaurant was something of a mystery.

Presently I became aware that one of the Americans was endeavouring to explain to the waiter, in the French of Chicago, that he was not satisfied with his bill. I thought it only civil to suggest to a fellow-countryman in linguistic difficulties that I would take pleasure in acting as an interpreter. He thanked me profusely, and when I had convinced him that his bill was quite right, he asked permission for himself and his friend to join me at my table over our after-dinner cigars.

The man with whom I had spoken was tall and thin, with a closely shaved face, and an eager, cat-like cast of countenance. His companion was a much smaller man, with black hair and eyes, and black chin whiskers. He was well dressed so far as the quality and cut of his clothes were concerned, but he was plainly one of those unfortunate men whose clothes can never be made to fit, and whom Nature designed to be the prey of the ready-made clothing merchant. In his shirt front he wore large diamond studs, and his watch chain was immensely heavy. His companion treated him with a curious mixture of servility and familiarity, both of which were apparently accepted with equal indifference.

"I reckon we'd better introduce ourselves," said the tall man, "and then we'll be quite comfortable. Might I go so far as to ask your name?"

I told him that my name was Norris.

"Then, Mr. Norris, let me introduce you to Mr. Silver—Mr. James H. Silver

"One of the Americans was endeavouring to explain . . . in the French of Chicago.

of Nevada. You must know him well enough by reputation. Mr Silver, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Norris. I can't tell you just where Mr. Norris hails from, but he's an American from 'way back, as you can see for yourself"

Mr. Silver and I bowed solemnly to one another, and he held out his hand to be shaken. I found his hand unpleasantly cold and moist, and dropped it as soon as possible. I knew perfectly well who Silver was. His reputation as an American millionaire, who had accumulated his enormous fortune by gambling on the stock market with loaded dice, had long ago reached Europe. As I looked at the miserable little villain, I was quite certain that I would not accept ten times his wealth at the price of accepting his physical and moral deformities.

"Come to think of it," said the tall man, "I haven't introduced myself. I hope, sir, that you will excuse me. Here is my card, and I'm delighted to make your acquaintance."

The card was large and thick, and bore in printed capitals the following inscription —

"ELEAZAR M. HOLT,
Practical Mahatma,
No. 418, RUE DE BERLIN.
Office Hours from 10 to 12"

As soon as I had read the card, Mr Holt gravely shook hands with me and remarked, "Now we'll have something to drink and enjoy ourselves. It's a comfort to meet somebody in this outlandish town who can speak the American language"

I had heard vaguely of Mahatmas, Theosophy, and Occultism, but I had never taken the slightest interest in the subject. However, I did not wish to seem unsocial,

and so, merely for the sake of saying something, I asked Holt what a Practical Mahatma might be.

"Well," replied the man, "you know those fools of Theosophists pretend that when a man has spent his life in learning to be a Mahatma, he ought never to use his knowledge except to precipitate idiotic letters and such-like nonsense. Now, I don't agree with them I'm a plain business man I studied seven years in Thibet, night and day, to be a Mahatma, and when I got my degree I went to practising, so as to earn a living."

"Then you have really been in Thibet?" I asked.

"I went through the regular five years' course at the Central University of Thibet," replied Holt, "and I took a double first in Magic Ancient and Modern, and in Applied Occultism. Then I took a post-graduate course of two years more in Astral Chemistry. Why, sir, when I left the University they made me a first-class offer to stay as Professor of Magic and Demonstrator of Astral Chemistry, but I said, 'Excuse me.' I'd had quite enough of Thibet, and as for the resident Mahatmas they were a lot of old fogies, and I couldn't stand their society at any price. So I came here to Paris, and put out my shingle as the only practising Mahatma in Europe. I'm going to close my office temporarily, however, for Mr Silver wants my whole time, and when he wants a thing he generally gets it."

"Are you studying magic?" I asked of Silver.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "that is, I'm studying one particular branch of it. I can see that it may be made very useful in my business."

"He is learning to separate his astral body from his natural body," said Holt 'He thinks it will come in handy in his Wall Street operations."

"I don't think I know exactly what an astral body is," I remarked

"I can tell you what it is in a very few words," said Holt. "You've got a physical body, haven't you? That's plain enough Well, underneath your physical body is your astral body, which looks exactly like your physical body, but isn't subject to the laws of matter. For example, you can lie down on a sofa, and send your astral body to Thibet It'll reach there in half a second, see everything you want it to see, and come back again at any time you may fix That's the way the Mahatmas are carrying out their scheme of University Extension Once a week one of the Professors of the Central University of Thibet sends his astral body to London, and instructs a class of Theosophists. I don't approve of the scheme myself, for if a man wants to be a Mahatma he ought to go through the regular University course. This smattering of magic that you can learn by taking up the University Extension plan will do a man more harm than good."

"Can Mr. Silver set free his astral body and travel wherever he wants to go?" I asked.

"Well! not quite yet," replied Holt, "though he will be able to do it in a very short time. Meanwhile, I make the separation for him, and send his astral body wherever he wants it to go."

"Do you mean to tell me," I asked, "that you could set my astral body free, and send it wherever I might want to go?"

"There's nothing in the world easier," said Holt. "See here. You're a gentleman, and you've done us a good turn Just come round to my office to-morrow, say between two and three o'clock, and I'll have your astral body out of you so quick that it'll take your breath away."

"Thank you very much," I replied, "but I don't care to have my breath taken away. I might not get it back again."

"Oh! that was only a figure of speech. I'll guarantee that it won't do you a

particle of harm, and it shan't cost you a cent either. I'll do the thing as a sort of friendly service, you understand. Then you'll begin to see what a big thing this Mahatma business can be made in the hands of a competent practitioner."

The man amused me by the enormous impudence of his pretensions. It occurred to me that it would not be a bad idea to take him at his word and put his pretensions to the test. Of course he was a liar, and it would be a pleasure to prove him to be such.

"I accept your offer with pleasure," I exclaimed. "To-morrow at half-past two I will be at your office, and will have my astral body extracted, if that is the correct expression. Do you use anæsthetics, or is the operation painless?"

"Absolutely painless," he returned. "You simply sit down in a chair and are hypnotised, as you would call it. The process is rather a pleasant one, and is perfectly safe, unless there is an excess of electricity in the air."

"What harm does electricity do?"

"Just this. The astral body is made up of what you might call condensed negative electricity. Now, the electricity in the air is positive electricity, and the two things are antagonistic. If a thunderstorm comes up while you are in your astral form the lightning will strike you, no matter if you are covered with lightning rods and insulators; and the instant an astral body is struck by lightning it is dissipated, and never can be got together again. You remember what I say, and if ever you are out in your astral form, and see signs of electricity in the air, you bolt for home, and get into your physical body without losing a minute's time."

Presently I rose to leave the room, and I could not help noticing that Silver was looking with admiration at my athletic figure. "Poor little devil!" I said to myself. "What a curse it must be to be so weak and ugly!" The Mahatma accompanied me to the door, and as I left him I once more promised to accept his reiterated invitation.

Had I been an older man I should, of course, have kept away from Holt's office and thought no more about him, but being young and reckless, I wanted to see what the fellow could possibly mean, and so at half-past two the next day I found myself at No. 418, Rue de Berlin.

There was no indication of any office in the house, but the *concierge* told me that an Englishman named 'Olt lived on the *entresol*. I made my way upstairs and rang at the door on the first landing. It was opened by the Mahatma himself.

"Glad to see you," he exclaimed. "Now, I call this real friendly. I'm just on the point of giving up this place, and have no servant, so I'll have to ask you to excuse the condition of my office. However, I've a chair for you, and that's about all you'll need." So saying, he showed me into a bare, carpetless room, furnished only with three chairs and a small writing-desk. One of the chairs was already occupied by Silver, who had, as it seemed to me, a look of painful expectation,—very much as he might have looked had he been waiting in the outer room of a dentist's office.

"Here's our friend Mr. Norris!" said the Mahatma cheerfully. "He's come to take a little promenade with you in the astral form."

Silver put out his damp, cold hand, and said good morning, in a mechanical sort of way.

"Now, Mr. Norris!" said the Mahatma, "let's have a clear understanding. You want to have your astral form released from your body for a few minutes, just to convince you that the thing can be done. I'll do it, and I pledge my professional reputation that there is no pain or danger about the operation, and that just as soon as you want to go back to your body you can do so. If you're the least afraid, now's the time to back down."

"The mist ... condensed into a body

"I am not afraid," I answered, rather testily, "for I don't believe there is any such thing as an astral body. Still I'm here to be convinced, and, if you please, we'll get to work at once."

"Very well," said Holt. "Just sit down on that chair next to Mr. Silver, and fix your eyes on mine. Mr. Silver, you're to accompany Mr Norris on his little outing, so just draw your chair a little nearer to me if you please."

Silver complied with the request, and the Mahatma stood in front of us, with his eyes fixed on ours, and began the attempt to hypnotise us.

I said to myself, "So this fellow is nothing but a common magnetising quack after all!" I had more than once been hypnotised, and had no fear of the process, so I waited unconcerned to see if the Mahatma's attempt would be successful.

I was just beginning to be drowsy when I was startled to see a mist gathering around Silver, which rapidly condensed into a body in all respects apparently precisely like that of the millionaire. The original body of Silver remained in the chair, in a profound sleep, and it was regarded with evident contempt by its astral companion. I was about to say to the Mahatma that I would have no more of the experiment, when a drowsiness that I could not resist came upon me. My eyes closed, and my consciousness melted away. Presently I was aware that I was on my feet again, and was looking down at a duplicate of myself that was sleeping calmly in the chair.

"There you are!" said Holt. "Never knew an astral body to come out of the shell so easy before. How do you feel?"

"A good deal astonished," I replied, "and singularly light."

"You'll get used to that in a few minutes," said Holt. "Put your foot down gently when you walk, and try not to float, for it would attract too much attention in the street. Now, Mr. Silver! If both of you gentlemen are ready, we'll take a little walk."

"How about leaving our bodies here?" I asked. "Will they be quite safe?"

"Perfectly safe," said the Mahatma. "There is no one in the apartment except ourselves, and I shall lock the door when we go out. When I have half a dozen people undergoing this experiment at the same time, I generally give them checks for their bodies, so as to avoid any mistake; but that isn't necessary between friends, and when there are only two of you."

Going downstairs, I found it extremely difficult not to yield to the tendency to float from the top to the bottom. My feet refused at first to cling to the earth, and when we reached the sidewalk Holt was obliged to take my arm in order to steady me. In a few minutes, however, I succeeded in adjusting myself to my new conditions, and began to enjoy the sensation of airy lightness.

I knew that the Silver who was walking beside me was only a sort of ghost, but there was nothing in his appearance which differed in the slightest degree from the other Silver. Neither could I distinguish any difference between my astral and my physical bodies, except that the former was much the lighter. Even my astral clothes were the exact duplicates of those which my other body was wearing, and the astral watch, penknife, and pipe, which I found in my pockets, were precisely like those which I ordinarily used.

"Do you see that lamp-post?" asked the Mahatma. "There is nobody in sight just now, and I'll take the chance of our being seen. Just oblige me by walking straight into that lamp-post as if there was nothing there."

I did so, and found that the lamp-post offered no obstacle to me whatever. I passed directly through it, or rather it seemed to pass directly through me. The Mahatma smiled triumphantly.

"Now you see," he exclaimed, "that your astral body is immaterial! You want to be very careful never to go into a crowded street when you are in the astral form, and never to run against any one. If you do, it will be discovered that you are immaterial, and there will be no end of a row. Why, Mr. Silver, here, the first time I took him out, was run into just in front of that house over yonder by a child rolling a hoop. The kid and the hoop went right through him, and the kid set up a yell that alarmed the whole neighbourhood. I wish you could have heard that child trying to convince its mother that it had run right through the middle of a gentleman."

The Mahatma laughed loudly at the reminiscence, and even the taciturn Silver chuckled.

"Where shall we go?" asked Holt. "I shouldn't advise any long excursion, considering that this is your first outing. Suppose we go into the Parc Monceaux and walk around where it is quiet, for a half-hour or so. You want to get thoroughly accustomed to your change of weight."

I assented to his proposal, and we had just reached the corner of the Boulevard, when I heard a rumbling sound that, as I now believe, was caused by a heavy cart. "That's thunder," cried the Mahatma, with a frightened look. "Stop till I look at my electrometer!" So saying, he took from his pocket a small instrument that resembled in appearance an aneroid thermometer, and glanced at its dial.

"The kid set up a yell that alarmed the whole neighbourhood."

"Why, the air is full of electricity!" he exclaimed. "We must get back to the office instantly, or I won't answer for the consequences. Mr. Silver, you go on ahead and open the door. I'll help Mr. Norris along."

Silver went on rapidly in advance, and I followed with the Mahatma. He seemed excited and alarmed, and protested that he could not understand how he could have forgotten to consult his electrometer before taking Silver and myself into the street. "However," he said, "we shall probably reach the house before the electricity

increases to the point of extreme danger, and another time I promise you that you shall not go out in your astral form unless the weather is in a perfectly safe condition."

When we reached the office we found the body of Silver still in the chair where we had left it, but to my intense surprise and horror Silver had taken possession of my own body, and was standing by my chair with a smile of triumph on his face. Before I could say a word the Mahatma cried out that he saw a flash of lightning. "Jump into Mr Silver's body this instant, if you value your life," he cried to me. "We will arrange it all right just as soon as the thunderstorm is over."

"But I don't want that contemptible body," I cried. "give me my own body this instant, or——"

"Or what?" asked the Mahatma. "How are you going to help yourself? Now just be sensible! Mr. Silver has, in his hurry, jumped into your body by mistake. You can't remain in the astral form without the utmost danger. You get into Mr. Silver's body for an hour or two, and then it will be safe for you to exchange with him and have your own body back again. I warn you that every minute you stand here you run the risk of being dissipated."

There was clearly nothing for it but to follow the Mahatma's advice. With great difficulty I managed to force myself into the vacant tenement of Mr. Silver. It was much too small for me, and squeezed me horribly about the chest. No sooner was I once more incarnated, than I turned to Silver and expressed my opinion of his stupidity, as I deemed it, in language that was very far from polite.

Silver made no reply, and as soon as I ceased speaking he went out of the room. Then the Mahatma said, with perfect coolness, "We've played a little game on you, Mr. Norris! My friend Mr. Silver wanted your body, and as he knew you wouldn't sell it, we had to get it by strategy. Mr. Silver is prepared to pay you handsomely for your body, on condition that you don't make a row. I might as well tell you that it won't do us any harm if you do kick, for no one will believe a word you say about the matter, and the only result will be that you will find yourself in a lunatic asylum. Me and Mr. Silver have an engagement at this hour, and so I'll trouble you to take yourself off."

What could I do? Violence was out of the question, for Holt could have broken every bone in the wretched little body in which I was encased, with the greatest ease. I saw that I was beaten. I had fallen into the hands of a pair of scoundrels, and they had perpetrated an unheard-of outrage upon me. I had no money with which to bribe the Mahatma, and an appeal to the police was, as he had said, quite out of the question. I walked out of Holt's office without another word, and, going into the little garden in front of the Church of the Trinity, sat down to think of any possible remedy for my misfortune.

I was disgusted to notice how little space my body occupied on the bench where I had seated myself, and how thin and ugly my legs looked as they were stretched in front of me. Mechanically I thrust my hand into my pocket, and it came in contact with something unfamiliar. I drew it out, and found that it was a heavy, old-fashioned purse. It flashed across me that possibly Silver might have left something valuable in his clothes, and I opened the purse eagerly. It proved to contain fully three thousand francs in paper and gold. Pleased with this discovery, I made an examination of my other pockets, and presently made a further discovery that put me at once into the best of spirits. I had found a bank book on Rothschilds' bank, showing that a very large sum was on deposit there; and, what was at least of equal value, I found a draft on the same bank, made in New York, for the sum of one hundred and fifty-three thousand francs. I knew now that I had Silver at my mercy. The man in giving me his cast-off body had unwittingly given me all his ready money, and possibly all his other property.

Nothing was more certain than that Silver, who had long ago sold his soul for money, would be glad to sell me my own body back again for the money which I now had virtually in hand. My course was plain. I would draw out a hundred thousand francs of the villain's money, and would then consent to take back my own body on condition that I should keep the money. Should Silver refuse to agree to this I would threaten to draw out all the money deposited in his name at Rothschilds', and then go to New York and take possession of all his property in America. There could not be the slightest doubt that the man would accede to my terms.

I sprang up as quickly as my feeble legs would permit, and, calling a cab, drove straight to the bank, where I was welcomed with a good deal of servility by the cashier, who evidently knew Silver well.

"I have called," I said, "to cash this draft. I will take a hundred thousand in cash, and will leave the remainder on deposit. I shall have to sign my name with my left hand, if you don't mind, for I am suffering to-day from rheumatism in the other hand."

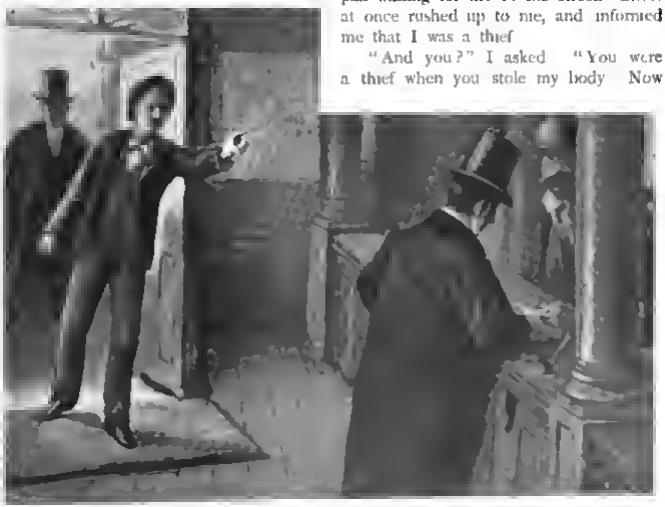
The cashier protested that any signature of Mr Silver's would satisfy him, and accordingly I endorsed the draft with my left hand. The cashier was in the very act of paying me the money when Silver and the Mahatma entered. Silver had evidently discovered the blunder he had made, and had rushed to the bank with the vague hope of preventing me from drawing the money.

"Don't pay that man!" Silver cried to the cashier. "He is an impostor."

I paid no attention whatever to Silver, and the cashier, supposing him to be a lunatic, told him that if he did not at once leave the bank the police would be called in.

Silver was on the point of making some further protest, but Holt, who had preserved his coolness, dragged him away. As I went out of the bank I found the pair waiting for me in the street. Silver at once rushed up to me, and informed me that I was a thief.

"And you?" I asked. "You were a thief when you stole my body. Now



"'Don't pay that man! He is an impostor.'

"'Mr. Norris, your proposal is simply extortionate.'"

that I am compelled to wear your despicable body, I propose to have the money that belongs to it. I venture to say that the money comes into my possession far more honestly than any money ever came into your possession."

"Take my advice, Mr. Silver, and don't quarrel with this gentleman," said the Mahatma. "He's got the drop on you, and you can't help yourself. Mr. Norris is a gentleman, and a very intelligent one. I don't believe there will be any difficulty in getting him to compromise this matter if we discuss it in the right spirit. Anyhow, we're not going to gain anything by making a row."

"I am quite willing to talk business with you," said I, "if you will abstain from threats and bad language. If you will agree to my terms the matter can be arranged, but I warn you I shall expect to be well paid. I have been treated infamously, and I am entitled to heavy damages."

"Just so," exclaimed the Mahatma: "I said Mr. Norris was an intelligent man."

"I am now going to Bignon's to dine," I continued. "If you will call there in an hour I shall have finished dinner, and shall be ready to talk with you. In the meantime, Mr. Silver, let me advise you to avoid all excitement. That body of mine, which you are wearing just now, suffers from valvular disease of the heart, and any excitement may bring about a fatal result."

I drove to Bignon's, and ordered a dinner that would be certain to astonish the stomach of Mr. Silver. I knew, from the appearance of Mr. Silver's lawful body, that he was a prey to dyspepsia, and it struck me as a particularly happy idea to bring about a monumental indigestion in the scoundrel's stomach.

I had not quite finished my dinner when Silver and the Mahatma entered the room where I was dining in solitary grandeur. I invited them to sit down and take a glass of wine. Holt accepted cheerfully, but Silver sat scowling at me and at his companion. He did not remain silent long, however. As I was in the act of helping myself to burgundy, he cried out, "For Heaven's sake don't drink that burgundy: it is deadly poison to my stomach."

"I sprang at Silver."

"I don't see what you have to do with your stomach just at present," I replied. "It belongs to me, and I propose to treat it as I see fit."

"I am here to get it back again," said Silver, "and not to drink wine and amuse myself. On what terms will you agree to exchange bodies again? Let me know what your terms are at once."

"My terms are these," I replied. "I will change bodies with you on condition that I retain the hundred thousand francs which I now have in my pocket, and that you pay for this dinner."

"Never!" cried Silver. "Mr Norris, your proposal is simply extortionate."

"Call it what you choose," said I, ostentatiously helping myself to *pâté de foie gras*. "You have heard my terms. Take them or reject them, as you see fit. I admit that this body of yours is disgracefully ugly, but I am willing to wear it for the sake of coming into the possession of the fifty millions of dollars that I am told you have invested in New York."

"I will give you fifty thousand francs," said Silver, "and change bodies this instant; but I implore you, don't put that *pâte* into my stomach. It's nothing less than murder."

"I said a hundred thousand francs," I replied. "I keep the offer open for ten minutes longer. After that I shall decline to have any further dealings with you." Then I heaped my plate with walnuts, and Silver groaned, as if the pangs of indigestion had already seized upon him.

"Now look here, Mr Silver," exclaimed Holt. "I have something to say in this matter. If you don't get your money back, who is to pay me for all the time and trouble I have spent in teaching you magic? Accept this man's terms at

once. They are the best you'll get, and in the circumstances I don't consider them exorbitant."

Silver grumbled, swore, and entreated; but I was inflexible, and before the ten minutes were up he had consented to my demands. Giving the finishing touch to his stomach with a large glass of champagne, I told the Mahatma that I was ready to exchange bodies. He immediately proceeded to hypnotise Silver and myself, and in a very few minutes I had the inexpressible delight of finding myself once more in my own comfortable body.

"Now that we have finished our business," I said to the two scoundrels, "I must request you to leave the room at once. I trust that this will be a warning to you both not to try your little game of stealing bodies a second time."

I was about to continue my moral exhortation, when it suddenly occurred to me that the hundred thousand francs that had a moment before been in my pocket were now safely in Silver's pocket. I had been so inconceivably stupid as to permit myself to be tricked a second time. For once I completely lost my head. I sprang at Silver and took him by the throat, demanding that he instantly give me my money. He made no reply—possibly because he was on the verge of asphyxia, and I was dragging him toward the window, with a vague idea of threatening to throw him into the street, when somebody hit me a tremendous blow on the back of the head. Of course my assailant was the Mahatma, and I imagine that his weapon was the favourite one of the American footpad—a sand bag. I went down as if I had been shot through the heart, and instantly lost consciousness. When I came to myself I was lying on a sofa in the room where I had dined, and a waiter was standing over me.

"It is time for Monsieur to wake up," he remarked. "It is late, and we are just going to close."

"Where are the two—my friends?" I asked.

"They went away hours ago," the waiter replied. "They said that Monsieur was a little sleepy, and that he should not be disturbed."

My head ached frightfully, but I could not discover that the skull was broken. With the help of the waiter I regained my feet, and in a few moments felt able to go home. The waiter called a cab, and I drove at once to my lodgings, and went to bed. I was quite well in the morning, and the first thing I did after breakfast was to go to the Rue de Berlin and inquire for Holt. The *concierge* informed me that he had left Paris without giving any address. I have never seen or heard of him since.

I know the explanation which every reader will give to this story. It will be said that I drank too much wine, fell asleep on the sofa, and dreamed the whole story of my experience with the Mahatma. I might accept this explanation were it not for the fact that the next day, when I examined my pockets, I found in them, in addition to several trifles of my own, a card-case belonging to Silver, a pipe which I had never seen before, and three letters, of no interest to me except for the fact that they were addressed to "James H. Silver, Care of Eleazar M. Holt."

Did I dream these things into my pocket? If so, the sort of dream which can transfer material objects from one man's pocket to another man's pocket is, it seems to me, rather more wonderful than the feat which I hereby solemnly assert the Mahatma Holt performed when tricking me into an exchange of bodies with his confederate.

W. L. Alden.

THE STONE CHAMBER

TAVERNDALE HOUSE

I HAVE been asked by so many friends to write down the following story that I have, under pressure, consented to do so. I therefore place the facts before my readers. I tell it exactly as it took place, and I leave it to you to decide as to its reason. The results, as you will see, were real and tangible; but the question will no doubt arise "Did I dream what I saw?—or was it the spirit power, which, unable to rest, used me as its medium?—or did my imagination, aided and excited by my crystal-gazing, lead me to do as I did?

Where do dreams and imagination end? and where does the real spirit power commence? and is it possible that we are mediums, good and bad, of another world? This is for you, not for me to decide. I will only tell you what happened.

In the early summer of 1893, in the month of June, I found myself (a widow of eight-and-twenty, with small means and no occupation) on a tourist steamer bound for a three-weeks' trip to the fjords of Norway, in search of health and fresh air, after many months spent in a small and airless house in London. Among our many passengers, who included all sorts and conditions of men, women, and children, were a lady and gentleman—Lord and Lady Glencome. They were middle-aged, pleasant, and inclined to be companionable. We were mutually attracted, and within a few days became quite friendly, and even intimate. It is wonderful on board ship how soon one gets to know people well, there is so little to do, and the life lends itself to companionship and conversation. We were lucky, too, in our weather, which no doubt aided our friendly instincts, and when we parted, at the end of three weeks, it was with mutual regrets, hopes of a speedy

meeting, and a warm invitation from the Glencoines that I should visit them in their beautiful old Tudor house in Gloucestershire.

I returned to my little house in Chester Street; the weeks and months passed, and I had almost forgotten our trip and the invitation, when one morning in September, amongst other letters, one in a strange handwriting ran as follows:

"TAVERNDALE HOUSE, GLOUCESTER.

"DEAR MRS. HAYWOOD,

"I hope you have not forgotten your promise to pay us a visit. I am writing a line to say we shall be at home from the middle of October for a month, and do hope you will find it convenient to come during that time. Glencoine is longing to show you this house, knowing how you appreciate old buildings, and if only the frost will keep off, the garden may still be looking quite pretty.

"Yours very sincerely,

"JANET GLENCOINE."

I consulted my almanac; found, curiously enough, that I was engaged to pay another visit in Gloucestershire about that time, and that I could fit in a Friday till Tuesday at Taverndale with great pleasure and convenience to myself. So I wrote to Lady Glencoine proposing this time, and in two days received an answer warmly accepting my proposal, but regretting the shortness of my visit. On my arrival at their station, about half-past four in the afternoon, I found the carriage waiting, and was told by the coachman that it was a drive of two miles. We passed through a lodge, and up a large and beautiful avenue of elm trees, which were scattering their golden leaves with great rapidity; and as we suddenly swung round a sharp corner and the house came into view, I was lost in admiration. One of those early Tudor houses, with its gabled roofs and high windows and chimneys, branching out at the end into two wings, almost untouched by modern hands, except where, here and there, there was absolute need of restoration. I had hardly time to take it in before we stopped at the door, and I stepped through the vestibule into the hall, and again my eyes had a feast. The dark wainscoting of oak, with which it was entirely panelled, and the picturesque high windows, the shields and armour hanging from the wainscoting, all made a lovely picture in the setting sun which was pouring through the mullioned window.

The footman led me into another room, also all panelled, which I afterwards discovered was called "My lady's parlour," where the party were assembled for tea. Lady Glencoine rose and greeted me warmly: explained to me that Lord Glencoine was out shooting, and introduced me to several of the guests, among whom, much to my astonishment, I found some cousins of my own—a Mr. and Mrs. Broughton. She also informed me that, being the end of the week, several guests had gone that day, but that we were still a party of ten: a Sir Patrick and Lady Grantham; a brother and sister, Captain and Lady Mary Shelvey; and my cousins, making up the party, with Lord and Lady Glencoine and their son, a young man of twenty-four who had just left Oxford. We sat talking and drinking tea for some time, waiting for the shooters to return; but finally she rose and proposed taking me to my room. We passed up the wide staircase, hung with family portraits of many generations, and then into a long low passage, from which we emerged into the gallery, which seemed to occupy almost all one side of the house, being about eighty feet long. Here again the wainscoting of dark oak reached to the beautiful white cornice. The furniture was inlaid, unique of its kind; and the windows a beauty in themselves, with their bows and deep recesses. The daylight was dying away, and the whole place looked weird and ghostly, but very beautiful.

Lady Glencoine was, I think, quite amused by my enthusiasm, and said her husband would not forgive her for showing it to me without him, but she could not do otherwise, as it was the only means of approaching my room; and as she said this she threw open a door in the panelling, and ushered me into a large, bow-windowed room hung with tapestry, looking out, as did the gallery, on a broad terrace walled with a yew hedge, beyond which was an old-fashioned garden still bright with hollyhocks, dahlias, and gladioli. As soon as she had left me, I rushed to the window and sat revelling in the beauties before me, and I came to the conclusion that they were indeed lucky people to be possessed of such a house and surroundings.

Being tired with my journey, I accepted Lady Glencoine's suggestion, and rested till I was roused by a dressing gong and my maid's appearance. She, too, was much impressed by the magnificence of all she had seen, but also rather fearful at the size and apparent loneliness of my room, and expressed a wonder that I should venture to spend the night there. Fortunately for me, my nerves were not moulded in the same shape as my maid's; and I congratulated myself that I was a person possessed of certainly average courage.

The dinner-bell rang, and I left my room, again traversing the long gallery, which was now lit. I met a footman at the far end, who was evidently deputed to conduct me to the drawing-room, where I was almost, if not quite, the last to appear.

I found myself taken in to dinner by Captain Shelvey, a young man who evidently had a good opinion of himself and no hesitation in displaying it. A place was left for me on one side of Lord Glencoine, and dinner commenced.

My neighbour kept me in close conversation; and Lady Mary, who occupied the right-hand seat opposite to me, also talked to our host without intermission, and it was not till dinner was half over that there was a pause, which enabled him to address me.

"Well, Mrs. Haywood," he said, in his cheery tones, "and what, so far, do you think of my old house? Did I exaggerate its beauty when I romanced about it to you on the ship last summer?"

"Oh, no," I exclaimed warmly, "of course I haven't half seen it as yet, but it seems to me that nothing could be more beautiful, and that words are not half good enough to describe it."

He smiled at my enthusiasm. "It's very lucky you were able to come, because I am afraid this will be your first and last chance of seeing it."

"Why?" I asked curiously, thinking what a very odd thing it was for him to say.

"Because," he answered, smiling rather sadly, "I am afraid I shall have to sell it. I have struggled on a long time in the hopes of better things, but bad times and rents going down as they have done, almost to nothing, make it impossible, and much as it grieves me, I am afraid it will have to go. Charlie and I cut off the entail some time ago, and it is already advertised."

"It is too sad!" I exclaimed. "It does seem such a grievous pity that an old family place like this should go away into the hands of strangers."

"Yes, it's not exactly nice," he answered, "and it was a long time before I could make up my mind to it; but it is what a great many people have come to, and nothing short of a miracle will save landed property in England now. And," he continued, "the maddening part of this place is, that we believe somewhere here, either in the house or grounds, there are jewels and treasure hidden, and we can't find them."

"What do you mean?" I asked, with astonishment.

"Well," said Lord Glencoine, "about fifty years ago my grandfather was turning out old boxes and safes, and he found a record, or rather diary, of an ancestress of ours, a Lady Glencoine in her own right, who was the owner of this house at the time when Cromwell was making havoc in all the English places. She had kept this diary for years; and the last record in it is an account of Cromwell having arrived at Gloucester, and a report of an intended raid on this house, and she writes that she is, at that moment, about to hide what she calls her 'priceless jewels' in a place only known to herself, so that they may be safe. Whether she did or did not was never known, and the only other entry in the diary is a few lines, written evidently by the maid, who tells of the soldiers' invasion that night, and that 'my lady' disappeared, and was never seen again; so whether she and the jewels were carried off by Cromwell's men, or whether she was murdered for the sake of them, remains a mystery; only my grandmother was so bent on trying to find them, that she sent for several architects and archæologists from London, who searched all over the house, and did succeed in discovering two secret staircases, but there was nothing in them, and no one ever found anything."

"How very, very extraordinary!" I exclaimed, "and how deeply interesting! But were *none* of the jewels ever found again?"

"Nothing," he answered—"in fact, till my grandfather bought a few there were no ornaments in the family of any sort; and that there were plenty in the old days is a certainty, because all the ladies whose pictures I will show you to-morrow have extraordinarily beautiful jewels on their heads and necks up to the time I told you of, and since then all those whose portraits have been painted have been noticeably without any."

"One feels inclined to go and have a search," I said, laughing, as we all rose to leave the dining-room.

"I know," he answered, "as boys, we used to be for ever looking and hoping, but we were always disappointed, and gave it up in despair at last."

We passed out of the dining-room into the drawing-room, which was hung with old English tapestry, in wonderful preservation. We clustered round the large wood fire, for it was a chilly evening late in October, with a slight frost.

"Didn't I hear Glencoine telling you about the lost jewels?" asked Lady Glencoine, as she knelt on the rug, and threw another log on to the already blazing fire.

"Yes," I answered, "and I was immensely interested It sounded such a wonderful tale—rather like a fairy story, I think."

"I cannot help believing," she answered, "that they are somewhere here, and that some day they will be found; only I am afraid it will be too late for us," she added sadly. Then suddenly she turned to me: "Mrs. Haywood, do you believe in ghosts?"

Before I could answer, my cousin, Hilda Broughton, broke in:

"Oh yes! didn't you know, Lady Glencoine, that Beatrice is a great medium? She can write automatically, and sees all sorts of strange things in a crystal ball. She's a wonderful person!"

"Do you really?" said Lady Glencoine, rising from the rug. "My dear Mrs. Haywood, how exciting! I am so deeply interested in these things Why did you never tell me about it?"

"I don't know," I answered shyly. "I do it sometimes. I have been a member of the Psychical Research Society for some time, and I took to it then, more or less, but I have not done it for a long time now."

"But you know, Beatrice," said Hilda, "you have done some wonderful things with your crystal."

"Well," I admitted, "I did see some rather curious things, and I made a few prophecies that came true."

"Have you got it here?" asked Lady Mary eagerly. "Do show it to us."

"What are you all so excited about?" asked Lord Glencoine, coming into the room at this moment.

"Oh, Herbert," cried his wife, "Mrs. Haywood does all sorts of extraordinary things: she writes automatically, and has a crystal in which she sees things, and we are dying to see her do it."

"I will go and get it," I answered, seeing that nothing else would satisfy them; and I left the room, and made my way upstairs. The moon was just rising and pouring into the gallery windows, which, in spite of the artificial light with which it was lit, gave it a ghostly look, and I shivered slightly as I hurried through. Though I was not a nervous nor imaginative person, still I had felt, each of the three times I had walked down this gallery, a consciousness that *some one* or *something* walked with me. There were no steps—there was no sound—but there was *something*, and this time it seemed to be even more defined and more conscious.

I picked up my crystal, and, as quickly as I could, made my way downstairs. As I entered the drawing-room I was greeted with innumerable questions: where would I sit? must the room be darkened? should they all hold my hand and wish? —in fact, questions for which no one waited for an answer were poured into my ears.

As soon as there was a lull, I spoke.

"You can leave the room exactly as it is. I must sit where I get no reflection on the crystal, and I do not want any one to touch me."

Lord Glencoine gave me a chair, and I moved it about till I got into what I considered a suitable light.

"Now," I said, "is there any one who wants particularly to ask something? Of course I can't promise that I shall see what they wish, or in fact anything, but I can try."

"Oh, I know!" cried Charlie Glencoine. "I say, father, let's ask about the jewels."

"Yes, do," said Lord Glencoine. "ask if you can see where the jewels are hidden—if they are hidden," he added, in a lower tone.

"Very well. Now, please, don't all stop talking; as long as you don't talk to me it does not matter, and when I begin to see anything I will tell it to you. It may be very slow, and it may not come at all, but please don't interrupt me till I take my eyes off the crystal again.

So they all seated themselves, and conversation went on in an undertone.

I concentrated all my sight on the crystal ball I had in my hand, and presently —after two or three minutes—I saw—what is always the first thing one does see—a kind of thickness in the glass, then that faded away, and I began to speak.

"I see," I said, in a slow, dreamy way, "what appears to be a small stone vaulted chamber; there is no window in it, but apparently some light from inside; in the middle of the room a lady is standing"—here I paused, as her figure was not yet very clear—"a lady who seems to be very fair, with ringlets clustering on her forehead, dressed in a stiff white satin dress with lace; and she is radiant with jewels"—here I heard, amidst the almost dead silence, a muttered "Ah" from Lord Glencoine. "It looks like a diadem of rubies and diamonds on her head, and ropes of pearls hang from her neck and over the body of her dress; and she has a diamond girdle clasped round her waist. But what seems more than

"I concentrated all my sight on the crystal ball"

anything else to attract my attention is a ring she is wearing—a ring that almost covers the second finger of her left hand: it is quite the biggest I have ever seen, and it seems to be a magnificent square ruby in the middle, and two large diamonds at each side; and with this finger she is beckoning—she is looking full at me as if to entreat me to follow her, and her expression is very weary and anxious She does not appear to move at all, and it is a face I have never seen before"

"Mrs. Haywood," said my host's voice, trembling with excitement, "describe to me please once more her dress."

I did so, telling him also that it struck me the dress was of the period of Sir Peter Lely's pictures, or perhaps a little earlier than that, and then, my eyes beginning to ache with the continued strain, I lifted them from the crystal, and met the astonished and excited gaze of my audience

"Do you know," said Lord Glencoine, coming up to me and speaking in a low voice, "that you have described exactly the ancestress I told you of—the Lady Glencoine who disappeared with the jewels"

"What do you mean? how do you know?" I asked eagerly.

"Because," he said, "in my study, where you have not yet been, there is a life-sized picture of that Lady Glencoine; and the most extraordinary thing is that the jewels she is wearing answer exactly to your description, and above all that strange ring is on her second finger."

I felt myself turning quite pale with my own discoveries. What did it all mean? And why was it given to me to see this strange picture?

Lady Glencoine came up "You look so exhausted I am going to carry you off to bed, Mrs Haywood. I have never been so much interested in my life as I have been to-night, but I think it has been too much for you—you look so pale and tired."

I owned to feeling fatigued, and shortly afterwards we proceeded upstairs to bed.

My hostess accompanied me to my room, and, having lit my candles, wished me good-night. I could see she was much excited, but that she would not say more, thinking I had had enough and was tired.

I undressed, dismissed my maid, and, going to the window, drew up the blinds, letting the full moon pour into the room. The whole terrace below me was lit up with it, making long and ghostly shadows, and one could almost imagine one saw the human phantoms of the past flitting up and down.

I got into bed, still leaving the moon looking into my windows, and fell asleep very shortly.

How long after I cannot tell—but the room was still in moonlight, when I was awaked by that nameless consciousness that I was not alone. Turning my head to the door, I saw what made my heart stand still and my blood run cold within me.

There, bathed in the rays of the moon, stood the lady of my crystal—the same face, gown, jewels, and with that strange and wonderful ring on her second finger, the stones of which sparkled in the light. With that finger she was beckoning to me. Too terrified to move or even to scream, I watched her, fascinated; and then my voice—was it my voice?—found itself in a frightened whisper:

"Who are you? what are you? and why do you come here?" I whispered: "go, go—you terrify me," and, almost before I had finished, the face and figure grew indistinct and disappeared: there was no sound, there was no movement. The place where she had stood was still in brilliant moonlight, but she was gone. Thank Heaven she was gone! My teeth were chattering with fear, my hands were cold and clammy, and I was almost beside myself with terror. With trembling hands I lit my candle—two—three candles—and I got out of bed and walked round the entire room; and there was nothing, nothing anywhere, and I began to doubt myself. Had I dreamt it? or was it a creation of my brain, overwrought with my "crystal" effort? I had gone to sleep with my mind full of this apparition, and doubtless I had dreamt it. I nearly persuaded myself that this was the case, anything else seemed so impossible, and with this determination I at last fell asleep.

Morning broke—one of those lovely autumn days, after a night of frost, which hastens on the winter, and reminds the lingering blossoms that their days are well nigh done—and as I got up and dressed myself I *almost* persuaded myself that it had been a dream, and that my imagination had run riot with me. Still it had been very real, and even as I walked down the gallery on my way to the breakfast-room, with the broad prosaic sunlight shining in through the windows, I again had that same conviction, if possible more strongly than before, that I was not alone, and I began to feel quite glad that my visit was to be a short one.

After breakfast I reminded Lord Glencoine of his promise to show me the house, and specially the picture. He readily consented; and Lady Mary, being also a new comer, begged to accompany us, and we left the breakfast-room.

We followed our host along a small passage which led straight from the dining-room, and throwing open a door almost opposite, he ushered us into his sitting-room, which was a large and spacious apartment, more or less hung (like the drawing-room) with old English tapestry, with the exception of one side of the room, and that had one large oak panel which reached from the window at one end to the tapestry at the other, and into which was let a life-sized picture of Eleanor, Lady Glencoine. The likeness was so startling, the face so exactly what I had seen both in the crystal and in my room, that I was quite staggered for a moment, and caught hold of a chair for support.

"There," said Lord Glencoine, "is the lady you described last night, do you see: is it not exact, Mrs. Haywood?"

"I saw what made my heart stand still"

"Yes," I answered slowly, recovering myself with an effort—"the same, the very same, only several years younger."

"Isn't it most extraordinary," he continued in an excited voice, turning to

Lady Mary, who also seemed like me, quite fascinated by the picture, "that Mrs. Haywood had never seen it?—never been here before, had you?" to me.

"Never," I answered; "never,—it is the most curious thing I have ever known" But I thought to myself he did not know *how* curious.

I remained gazing at the picture. The details, the hands, the dress, that wonderful ring—everything was as I had seen it. what did it mean? was there more to come? And something within me—or did it pass by?—told me there *was* more still to come, and with this consciousness my heart sank within me. We passed on to the other rooms; at another time I should have enjoyed seeing them, but now all interest had suddenly left me. I was either worn out physically, or troubled mentally; and though I tried hard to shake it off and rouse myself, still all that day it was with me—driving, walking, eating,—I lived in a sort of dream, seeing nothing but that one lady, hearing nothing but that indefinable sound, which yet was not a sound, but only a feeling it absorbed me, while it troubled me, and I think, if I had not been ashamed to do so, I should have gone away that afternoon. Also, my mind was in a whirl· if she came again that night and beckoned to me, should I go, should I face what she had to show me, and would my courage last? Then I smiled at my folly, and remembered my decision that it was only a dream, and nothing supernatural—no message from the spirit world.

The night was approaching, and we were at dinner again. Every one but myself seemed to be even gayer than the night before When it was over, and we were in the drawing-room, all alike clamoured for more crystal-gazing; but here I was firm in a refusal, and luckily for me Lady Glencoine came to my rescue. She was an observant woman, and, I think, had noticed my preoccupation and depression; and when they had settled down to whist and music she came up to me, and, remarking my tired appearance, begged me not to sit up, but to slip out of the room with her. I was really thankful to accede to her request, and together we went upstairs and entered the gallery

"How beautiful!" she exclaimed, pausing for a moment to look out of the window on to the moonlit terrace below, "but how weird! Are you sure, my dear, you do not mind sleeping alone in this part of the house? You looked, this morning, as if you had not slept, and I know so many people are nervous."

Just for a moment—only for a moment—my courage completely left me, and it was on my lips to say I was nervous, and would she allow me to change my room, but something stopped me: was it that feeling again of some one standing beside me, that froze the words on my lips, and left me standing looking at Lady Glencoine, who was, I think, beginning to wonder at my silence?

"Oh no, thank you," I said hurriedly. "I really like that room, it is so pretty; and it would be quite wrong to make a change, I think," and I laughed nervously.

She looked at me for a moment, and seemed as if she were about to say something more, but evidently changed her mind, for, taking me to my room, she said good-night, and left me, and I heard her steps growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

I hastily rang for my maid, and, to give myself an excuse for detaining her, I insisted upon having my hair thoroughly washed and brushed But, keep her as long as I could, the time went slowly, and it was not yet midnight when she left me, and I knew now I was alone for the night, to face it as best I could.

I noticed the blinds had been left up, and the curtains were not drawn—the housemaid, I suppose, having thought I liked this; and I left it so, preferring even the ghostly moonlight to the utter loneliness of darkness I determined to

An irresistible force compelled me to follow.

keep awake, to listen and to watch; but gradually my eyelids drooped over my tired eyes, and sleep stole over me, and being, I suppose, exhausted by the events of the night before, I fell into a troubled, restless slumber. Again I was awaked, and I opened my eyes. I knew what they would fall on. For a moment the room

was in slight shadow, caused by a cloud passing over the moon; but as it cleared away, and left it in brilliant light again, it revealed the figure of Eleanor, Lady Glencoine, standing there with the same dress, jewels, and expression of the night before, still with her finger upraised, beckoning, almost entreating. There was no doubt in my mind as to what I should do: an irresistible force compelled me to follow her. Did we open the door, or did we go through it? I never knew, but in a moment we were in the gallery. Here, even in spite of the terror which possessed me, I could not help noticing the strange beauty of the scene.

The gallery was flooded almost from one end to the other with the moonlight, imparting to the pictures a lifelike appearance, making them into a living audience watching us as we flitted by, I with my strange guide always going on, sometimes passing into the deep shadows that were cast here and there, and then emerging again into the light which lit up the radiant jewels she was wearing, and I felt as if I were in a dream that had no awakening, or maybe had passed into another world of silence and spirits.

Quite at the far end she paused, and I noticed her hand with the ring on it felt up and down the *last panel but one*, and then she pushed back what seemed a bolt, it looked so easy, and I felt sure I had seen how she did it. the panel opened, and she went through a small stone archway, I still following, into a vaulted passage, and then for a moment I lost sight of her, but only for a moment, and as I turned what seemed to be a corner, I came upon a room, a small vaulted chamber, and as I looked into it, the certainty flashed across me that it was the room I had seen in my crystal. I held my breath: the lady was on her knees, almost tearing off her jewels, and throwing them into what seemed to be an aperture in the floor. When she had done, she took a stone which was lying by, and covered them with it, and then she stood for a moment wringing her hands over the spot, and I saw the ring, the only ornament that she had not divested herself of, slip off her finger on to the floor, and then, without appearing to notice it, she left the room. I stooped for one second, picked up the ring, and followed her.

As we came, so we returned—along the passage, through the still open panel, which closed behind me—into the gallery. I saw her face for one moment after this, and then throwing up her arms she vanished—vanished completely, as if she had never been there. I went to the window: nothing, nothing to be seen but the moon looking down in full beauty on the terrace garden, and no sound but the gentle moaning of the wind, which had risen during the night. Trembling in every limb, I stumbled back into my room, but more I cannot tell: I suppose I fainted; but the next thing I was conscious of was finding myself lying on my bed, the room in darkness, and still tightly grasped in my hand was the ring. I lit the candles, and kept them burning by me till the morning, when I fell into a sleep, and did not open my eyes till my maid stood by my bedside, and told me it was nearly breakfast time; "And, ma'am, you do look bad!" was her sympathetic remark.

I dismissed her, and, jumping from my bed, ran to the looking-glass. I really think I expected my hair was grey—but it was still its own natural brown, I was thankful to see; but there were great black rings under my eyes, and my lips and face had lost all their colour. I opened the drawer, and there, lying in all its beauty, was the ring. I think the stones were the most wonderful I had ever seen; and as I slipped it on to my finger it covered quite three parts of it. I hastily dressed, and, opening the door, passed downstairs. It is a curious fact, but that consciousness of another presence had gone, completely gone, and I realised

"'Lord Glencoine, is this the ring?'"

this with a sense of freedom and release as I hurried on. I opened the dining-room door: I was evidently very late, and all eyes were turned upon me

"Good gracious, Mrs. Haywood!" exclaimed Lord Glencoine, "what has happened to you? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

I did not answer, I walked across the room to where he was standing, and in a voice trembling so that I could hardly frame my words, I handed him the ring

"Lord Glencoine," I said, "is this the ring?"

He took it, and he too looked as if he had seen a ghost. Silence fell on them all for a moment, while they remained looking at me.

"Good Heavens!" he said at last, "where have you been to find this? Am I mad, or is it real?"

Here they all crowded round him. Lady Glencoine became quite pale, and I thought she would have fainted; and I could see they all shrank a little from me, as if they thought I had been too near the supernatural world.

"I have been," I answered, sinking into a chair, "into the room my crystal showed me; I have seen your jewels there massed, heaped into a hole in the stone floor." And then, slowly and with many pauses, I told them word for word what had happened—where I had been and what I had seen. I think if it had not been for the ring, which lay on the table a tangible proof of my story, they would one and all have declared me mad. But even Captain Shelvey, who had treated the crystal-gazing with contempt and ridicule, sat silenced. No more breakfast was eaten; nothing else was thought of: one and all declared that I must go and take them there at once. Here Lady Glencoine interposed. Excited as she was, she would not have me do this now. Seeing my state of mental and physical exhaustion, she insisted upon my lying down in her sitting-room and plying me with beef tea and brandy.

Although it was Sunday, all idea of church was abandoned, and an air of excitement and mystery pervaded the entire household.

However, after an hour's rest and some food, I declared myself fit to go; and the whole party, led by me, proceeded upstairs. It struck me forcibly, as we passed along the gallery, the wonderful contrast of myself and my phantom guide of last night flitting along in the moonlight, in silence, with the dead of many years looking at us from the walls,—and now ten chattering human beings tumbling over one another in their eagerness each to be the first to make the discovery. I walked straight to the panel—the last but one; and then I paused—paused, because suddenly and completely the knowledge and power of opening it had passed from me. My hands dropped to my sides, and I turned round and faced the anxious and expectant people.

"I have forgotten it," I cried; "it has suddenly gone from me; I cannot tell you how to open it."

"What do you mean?" said Lord Glencoine anxiously: "you told me it slid. Push it,—let us try."

He approached the panel, and he tried—we all tried—but nothing would do. For more than an hour we went on pushing, feeling for a bolt, trying by every means we could think of to effect an opening, but all in vain; at last we gave it up in despair, and went downstairs bitterly disappointed, and I sat hour after hour in the drawing-room, going through last night's scene again—trying to recall the lady's movements as she passed her hand along it: all in vain—the knowledge had gone from me, and it was useless. I could see, too, Lord and Lady Glencoine were terribly disappointed, though they did their best not to let me see it, and talked of having the panelling broken open the next day.

In the afternoon several of the party went for a walk, but Lady Glencoine and I remained by the fire, carrying on a spasmodic conversation. Suddenly a thought came to me, and I rose hastily and hurried to my room.

When there, I took the crystal from the drawer, and sitting down with it in my hand, I gazed into it, breathless with excitement. Should I, or should I not, see what I wished? I watched the usual mist rising in it, and then—yes—the lady again appeared; this time, though, her hand was not upraised, she was standing

there. I longed, I almost prayed, that she might open the panel to me; and then, to my intense delight, I saw her hand slowly move towards the wall behind her, and, placing the back of her hand on the panel, she let her finger nails just pass under the framework, and it sprang open.

I waited for a moment till the picture faded away, and then, throwing down the crystal, I ran downstairs, almost falling down the steps in my haste. Into the drawing-room I flew, where my hostess was still sitting dreaming idly before the fire in the fading light.

"Come, come," I cried, "I have found how to open it"; and startled, and I imagine rather thinking I had gone mad, Lady Glencoine followed me, calling to her husband, as she saw him passing through the hall, to come with us. I again went into the gallery and approached the panel. Trembling with excitement, my knees shaking beneath me, I placed the back of my hand on it, passing my finger-nails under the framework, and immediately it flew open. Almost faint with my discovery, I leant against the wall, and Lord and Lady Glencoine and their son remained staring at the open doorway.

I was the first to recover myself.

"A light—a light!" I cried; and ran to my room, returning with a candle and a box of matches.

"Lady Glencoine," I said, lighting them, "either you or your son must wait here, as we cannot risk the door being shut upon us. Come, who will stay?"

"I had better do so," she answered, "as I shall be of no use, and I am not quite sure I should like to venture into it."

"But first," I said (so certain was I that we should discover the jewels), "first we must get a crowbar, or something, which will remove the stone; because, although it is loose, it is a large one, and would be too heavy for our hands, I think."

We touched the gallery bell; and the butler, who had lived many years in the family, answered it, and I think he was nearly overcome when he saw the open door, but he too was filled with excitement, and hurried off for an implement.

Then we started. I have often wondered since that we had the courage. I led the way, followed by Lord Glencoine, his son, and the butler.

"How very extraordinary we should have never found this passage!" exclaimed my host; "and no steps too—so curious—just a level passage."

In a moment, when we got into the room, we gazed in silence and awe. Lord Glencoine took the candle from me, and kneeling down on the floor examined it. There, scattered about, were bits of old stuff—rags, they might be called—and amongst them was a skull and some *bones*.

"It is what I suspected," he said, in a low, hushed tone: "bones—human bones. It means that that poor lady must have come here to hide the jewels, and the door must have been shut upon her, and she died an awful death. Even after these hundreds of years, how terrible it seems!"

The horror of what he said was upon us, and for a moment we stood solemnly gazing at the human tragedy of many years ago. Then, recovering himself, he turned to the butler.

"Come," he said—"the crowbar."

I pointed to the stone, and in a moment they had lifted it; and there, lying in scattered and careless profusion, were the celebrated jewels of Eleanor, Lady Glencoine, for the sake of which she had gone to meet this terrible death.

In silence we lifted them out—diamonds, rubies, the pearls, the girdle of the picture—none were missing; together with heaps of smaller necklaces and other

ornaments. We carried them into the daylight and the gallery, where Lady Glencoine was anxiously awaiting us.

"Far beyond our wildest hopes," said her husband, in a low voice "Taverndale is saved, and to you," turning to me, "we are indebted for this."

I shook my head. It was not I. I was only the instrument—the medium. But it was no use saying this now, and I had had enough. Mind and body alike both craved for rest, and I left them and went to my room. That night I slept without a waking thought. If the Phantom Lady came to me, my sleep was far too deep to be disturbed; but I think her work was done, and that she too was taking her rest.

"We gazed in silence"

My story is over. Perhaps some will like to hear that the Glencoines, saved by the many thousands their jewels realised, still live on at Taverndale.

The day after the discovery they reverently gathered up the remains of Eleanor, Lady Glencoine, and placed them in a corner of the churchyard; and, often as I have been to Taverndale since that time, and inhabited again and again that same room, I have never once felt that strange presence. My own belief is, that her weary steps will nevermore tread that long gallery, and that she has gone to her rest, for which she had sought so long

But the mysteries, to us, of these things always remain. The spirit world is so near us, and we are mostly so unconscious of it, so slow to believe it; and, although bordering on it, we have so little faith and so little insight Many break their hearts or go mad in seeking to unravel it Some day, somehow, it will come to us, and we shall know it. Till then, let us wait—wait—wait

MABEL HOWARD.

THE STORY OF A TUSK

IT was a fine spring morning in the City: even in the great dingy warehouse, where Cecil Kensley was engaged in cataloguing a vast store of ivory in preparation for the periodical sales, the sun beamed pleasantly. It lit up the dark corners of the building, and played everywhere upon hundreds of smooth, rounded elephants' teeth, varying in colour from a rich creamy yellow to darkest brown—from the gleaming tusk, fresh chopped within the last year from the head of a young bull, to the huge, dark, discoloured, almost black-skinned tooth, that for a hundred years had lain unnoticed in some mud swamp, or for generations had decorated the grave or kraal-fence of some native chief. There they lay, those precious pillars of ivory—solid scrivelloes, Egyptian soft teeth, Ambriz hard irregulars, billhard and bagatelle scrivelloes, bangle teeth, Siam, Niger, Abyssinian, Bombay, West Coast, Cape, and all the rest of them—upon which the world sets so great a store, and for which mankind is so rapidly exterminating a species.

Those wonderful teeth, dumb memorials, so many of them, of dark tales of blood and suffering, of slave raids, plundered villages, murders, floggings, terrible journeys to the coast, unutterable scenes of horror and woe,—what histories could they not unfold? But the tusks lay there, hugging their grim secrets, silent and mute enough.

Cecil Kensley, the person cataloguing these treasures of ivory in a purely matter-of-fact way, was a good-looking, fair-bearded man of thirty, partner in a wealthy firm, a bachelor, somewhat of a man of pleasure out of office hours, but in business smart, shrewd, and hard-working. The cataloguing of such an accumulation of ivory as that great warehouse held was a lengthy business, and all day, until four o'clock, Kensley was engaged, with the help of the warehousemen, sorting, turning over, and writing down. Before taking a short rest for luncheon, his eye fell upon one magnificent tusk—long, perfectly shaped and balanced, massive, highly polished, and, in colour, of the richest chrome yellow. It lay somewhat apart, and appeared to have no fellow; a careful inspection of the rest of the warehouse, and a single glance at that peerless tooth, showed that even out of all that vast collection no possible match for it could be found.

Kensley had been working all the morning at the far end of the warehouse; he now stood by the tusk which had so taken his eye.

"'The tooth is a real beauty.'"

"Hallo, Thomas!" he said, interrogating the man who stood by him, "what have you got here? What a grand tooth! Where's the fellow to it? Is it an odd one?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man, "it's an odd tooth, and a rare beauty. It's years since I saw the like of it. It's a grand tusk, as you say: I ran the measure over it, and it went 9 ft. 2 in., and it weighs just on 170 lb. It's as nigh perfect as can be, but there's just one little bit of a flaw down there by the base—an old wound, or something of the kind. There's a sight of good ivory in that tooth, and it must be as old as the hills a'most."

Kensley had seen in the fourteen years of his experience thousands of fine teeth; yet, connoisseur though he was, he thought, as his eye ran lovingly over that magnificent nine feet of ivory, splendid in colour, curve, and solidity, that he had never seen such another. He stooped to look at the flaw the man spoke of. Within a foot of the darker portion at the base, just beyond where the ivory had manifestly emerged from the flesh of the gum, there appeared a curious fault in the graining of the tooth, elsewhere perfect. The growth had been disturbed by some foreign substance, and the graining, instead of being as regular and even as a pattern woven by machinery, swept in irregular curves round the centre of the flaw.

Kensley rose to his feet again. "It's not much of a fault," he said, "and the tooth's a real beauty. I've been meaning this long time past to have such a tusk at my rooms, to decorate a corner or hang upon the wall. I think I'll take that fellow, Thomas, and pay for it; it will be a long time before I come across a better. See that it goes up to my flat to-morrow, will you? and take care how it's carried. I don't want it spoiled."

"All right, sir," replied the man, "I'll see to it myself. I'll give it a bit of a clean up and take it up for you to-morrow morning."

Two evenings after this conversation, Cecil Kensley left the office and walked, as was often his custom, steadily westward. He made his way by the Embankment and Pall Mall, then up St. James's Street, and so to Mount Street, where his dwelling was situated. Arrived at Mount Street, he let himself into his flat. It was a pleasant set of rooms on the first floor, furnished in very excellent taste with most luxuries that the cultivated male mind can suggest. In one corner, leaning against the wall, stood the ivory tusk, which, now cleaned and polished, formed, if an unwonted, a very noble ornament to the chamber. Kensley's eye rested on it with pleasure; he went to the corner and carefully examined his new possession. It was now six o'clock; the cold spring evening was closing in and the

light fading. At eight o'clock three friends were dining with Kensley, preliminary to a night of cards. Having drunk some tea which his man brought in for him, and lighted a cigarette, Kensley drew his comfortable armchair towards the pleasant firelight and smoked contentedly. He had been late for several nights past—he was never a very early man—and now, having cast away the end of his cigarette, he lay back in his chair and blinked drowsily at the red glow of the firelight. In ten minutes he was fast asleep and dreaming. Now, although Cecil Kensley sometimes dozed for half an hour or an hour before dinner in this way, it was seldom that he dreamed. His dreams this evening were fantastic and most strange—so strange that they are worth recording. Here is what he saw:—

In an open clearing among pleasant African hills, covered for the most part with bush and low forest, lies a collection of huts, circular and thatched, as are all native huts. Just above them, on rising ground, and surrounded by a strong stockade, stands a larger and more important dwelling, oblong in shape, its interior screened from the fierce sun by a low verandah, and thatched, as to its roof, with grass in the native fashion. It is a hot morning in the glowing tropical summer—the season of rains—vegetation and flowers are everywhere in their freshest verdure and beauty. Fleecy clouds lie at this early hour of morning upon the face of the eastern sky, and hang in a long line midway upon the sides of a high mountain some miles distant. Seated just outside the stockaded enclosure is a European, clad in the broad-brimmed hat, doublet, loose breeches, and buff riding boots of a bygone time. Somehow the face of this European, with its sallow cast, peaked beard, and fierce moustaches, is strangely familiar to the eye and brain of the dreamer, though he cannot in his sleep exactly recall how. Round about the Portuguese, for such he is, are half a dozen soldiers of his country, in buff coats and steel caps, bearing in their hands antique pieces—snaphaunces. Squatting in front are thirteen or fourteen naked Africans, waiting the white man's will.

"Well," speaks the commander, for such he is, "is the gold all here? Stand forward, Kanyata."

A native steps out from his fellows, and hands the commander a quill of gold—gold dust and tiny nuggets—the fruit of a week's hard toil and labour of himself and his family. Each native in turn stands forward with his precious store, and tremblingly hands it to the fierce, sour-looking white man. In his turn a young man sullenly comes out of the rank, and hands in his quill. There is a very dangerous look in the commander's eye as he takes the quill, holds it out and surveys it. "So," he interrogates, "that is your week's work, Zingesi?"

The young man answers in a hopeless, yet half defiant way: "My lord, I have toiled for seven days in the river sands, and all that I have gained I bring to you. You took from me my wife; if it had been otherwise, the quill might have been full. I have no one to help me. I can do no more."

"Thou dog!" snaps out the commander, with a look of black passion, "I told thee seven days agone that thou mightest take the wall-eyed maid to wife, to help thee. Why hast thou neglected my warning?"

"Oh! my lord," replies the native, "I like not Mosuma, the wall-eyed maid, and I will not take her to wife,"—then, passionately, "Where is my own wife? There, in thy vile hut, thou thief and robber! Do thy worst: I will find no more gold for thee."

"Away with him!" roars the commander, now in a fury of passion, to his soldiers; "tie him up and give him two hundred lashes."

The soldiers seize the unfortunate, take him to a tree hard by, and tie him up.

But now, before a stroke is given, an old native, somewhat fantastically adorned, who has been standing among the villagers at a little distance, comes forward and salutes the officer.

"Great chief of the Bazunga (Portuguese)," he says, "spare, I pray thee, Zingesi! He is my only son, and the punishment is great. Let him work for thee for another week. Perchance he has been bewitched. I will brew him strong medicine, and he shall bring thee more gold."

"Out with thee, Mosusa, thou evil-minded witch-doctor!" cries the commander. "'Tis too late. Thou shouldst have used thine arts with Zingesi before. Begone, or they shall serve thee as they serve Zingesi!"

With a hopeless yet terrible gesture Mosusa quits the crowd, and retires to his hut on the village outskirts. Meanwhile, Zingesi being tied up, two Portuguese soldiers, casting off their buff coats and tucking up their sleeves, take each in hand a cruel whip of hippopotamus hide, and begin their task. They flog by strokes of fifty; each, in presence of that grim taskmaster, laying on the blows with all his strength. With the first ten cuts the blood spouts freely from the unfortunate native, whose cries and groans might surely touch the hardest heart. But there is no mercy. Zingesi's back at the hundredth stroke is a mass of raw and bleeding flesh; his face has assumed an ashy pallor. At a hundred and fifty his head falls over upon his shoulder, he swoons, and can feel no more. The man wielding the whip halts for an instant, looks at the commander, and says, "Shall I go on, Captain?"

"Go on, of course, and be damned to you, till he has had the full two hundred," answers the captain venomously, as he rises from his chair and goes into his hut again.

The horrible task proceeds, and the soldiers, not daring to slacken their blows, complete the two hundred strokes. By that time Zingesi, his frame already weakened by recent fever, is beyond the reach of further ills. His body, unloosed from the tree, falls limply upon the hands of the soldiers, and is laid upon the shamed earth. Life has clean fled from that poor mangled piece of flesh and blood.

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It is night. The short African twilight has vanished; the moon has not yet arisen. Far away in the depths of the forest there crouches over a fire of wood Mosusa, the old witch-doctor, father of the dead Zingesi. His face, lit up by the red flames, has lost the sullen misery of the morning. His eyes glare with the intensity of a fierce passion, the sweat drips from his brow, every muscle of his body quivers. He rises, paces slowly round the fire, keeping always within the limit of a circle which he has traced in the sand, uttering as he passes a low monotonous chant. Now and again he casts into the fire the skins of snakes and lizards, bones, the dried livers and hearts of certain animals, poisonous bulbs and herbs, and other paraphernalia of the native wizard. Anon he pauses in his chant, listens, and gazes intently into the gloom of the forest. On one side of the fire lies coiled up a huge serpent, a python, whose cold glittering eye watches intently Mosusa's every movement.

Mosusa approaches the great snake, and says, "Will he come, think you, O my friend? The forest is wide, and the great one wandered far this morning." The serpent lifts its flat head, darts out its long forked tongue, and rubs its nose caressingly against Mosusa's leg; then, swiftly uncoiling, it glides to the other side of the fire and lies with its head pointing to the forest. Mosusa goes and stands by its side. Presently a rumbling noise is heard; nearer and louder it comes, and then from the pall of the forest there looms within reach of the firelight a huge dark form—the form of an immense bull elephant. The great creature, bulking

There looms . . . a huge dark form.

there dark and mysterious within the ring of firelight, bears but one tusk, long, thick, and even; its head moves very slowly up and down; its outstretched trunk gently quivers as it tests every air of the night; and its small sunken eye, fixed keenly upon Mosusa, indicates expectation.

"O great one," says Mosusa, saluting with upstretched right hand, "lord of the forest, wisest of the creatures, thou hast come at my summons. Hear me! Thou and I were born long ago upon the same night, in the same country. Long have we known one another, long have been friends—since the day when thy mother was slain by the spears of Monomotapa, and thou and I grew up together as children within the kraal of the king. But now I wax old, and near my end, while thou art in thy prime, still young and lusty, and like to live an old man's lifetime and more. And before I leave this earth for the land of shadows one thing I have to ask of thee. Thou rememberest, long long years ago, how I whispered to thee, when thy tusk was budding and thy captivity grew dangerous to thyself, that now was the time to seek the forest and escape. And thou wilt remember how in thy first youth, when Monomotapa, king of the tribes, had his first hunt for ivory, and slew fifty of thy kindred within the ring of fire, I warned thee the night before by the great serpent, grandfather of Tari here, and thou fleddest away and savedst thyself! To-morrow, O great one, I want thine aid. The captain of the Bazunga goes forth to hunt in the forest. This day he has slain my son.

"The white man is flung to earth."

To-morrow be thou within the forest, and when he comes slay me this evil man, the cruel persecutor of thy race and mine. No harm shall come to thee. So shall we be quits, and in the land of shadows I shall remember thee and joyfully await thy coming!"

The elephant moves silently a pace or two forward, just touches Mosusa delicately upon the shoulder with its trunk-tip, then turns and disappears again into the darkness.

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Again the scene shifts before the mind's eye of the dreamer; the witch-doctor and his firelight fade out, and broad daylight once more streams upon the African forest. The Portuguese captain is marching through the wilderness in search of elephants. In front of him are two trackers, who walk swiftly upon the spoor of a troop of the great tusk bearers. Not far in the rear, mingling with other hunters, is Mosusa, whose dark countenance wears this morning a very singular expression.

Presently, after passing some low hills, the white man posts himself in some thick cover in a shallow gorge commanding a broad worn path. The bulk of the native hunters are sent far in front in a wide semicircle, to drive in elephants towards the ambush. There is a long interval, and then, crashing through the bush, appear at a slow trot the forms of five cow elephants. At the nearest of these the commander discharges his piece. The great creature, sore stricken, charges this way and that; at length, bristling with fifty spears, spouting the red blood from her trunk and struck by other bullets from the white man's snaphaunce, she falls heavily to earth. But while the party are gathered round the fallen beast, and the natives busy themselves in extricating their spears from the carcase, a sudden noise is heard behind. There, trumpeting hideously, comes a mighty single-tusked elephant —Mosusa's elephant of the last night. The black men, naked and disencumbered, fly, all of them save one, far down the gorge, and scatter into the forest beyond. The white man, truth to tell, is bold and brave enough. Trusting to his heavy piece and his own pluck, he stands his ground. It is late indeed to fly, encumbered as he is with weapon and European clothing. As the grim monster charges down upon him, he steadily raises his snaphaunce and fires. But, just as he pulls trigger, Mosusa, standing behind his shoulder, jerks his right arm, the bullet flies wide of its intended mark, and strikes the elephant at the base of the great solitary tusk, just where the ivory is sheathed in the flesh. Mosusa leaps aside, there is a wild curse in Portuguese; in the same instant the savage scream of the enraged elephant thrills upon the hot morning air, the white man is flung to earth, and the great gleaming tusk drives deep through his body. Zingesi is avenged. The elephant withdraws his tusk, kneels upon the yet living man, and crushes the last remnants of humanity into a hideous, shapeless mass.

All this Mosusa has witnessed with bright eyes and the fiercest satisfaction. And now, raising his right hand, again he salutes the monstrous beast and speaks. "O thou great one, mighty chief, lord of the forest, I thank thee for what thou hast done. My time grows short: I die quickly. But thou, O my friend, live thou, live to slay the accursed white men, who pursue thy kindred and bring death and worse than death into this land of thine and mine." As he runs on, Mosusa's voice seems as the voice of one possessed; his eyes are fixed and open, as though gazing far into futurity. "And when thine appointed time comes," he goes on, still addressing the mighty beast before him, "let thy tusk carry with it yet more of death and evil to the white man. There is blood now upon it: let blood be with it in its passage through the years to come, until it shall once more mingle with the earth again. And now, great one, one thing more has to be done. Let

my blood mingle here with the white man's. slay me, O my friend, and all shall be finished."

But the elephant stands there in front of the frenzied African, its little eyes fixed upon his eyes, its body swaying ever so slightly from side to side, its trunk held out as if inquiring

"I see what thou requirest, O great one," cries Mosusa. "Thy blood too must flow, and at my hands!"

Suddenly he raises his spear, plunges it into the creature's trunk, and as suddenly withdraws it. The beast screams with pain, the blood gushes forth from the spear-thrust, and in a moment, with a blow of the wounded member, the elephant has beaten the old native to the ground. In the next moment the re-infuriated beast kneels quickly upon Mosusa and crushes the life from his frame, as it had crushed the white man's. The two bodies lie there together, misshapen, mangled, yet still warm. And now the elephant, having completed his work, turns slowly away and plunges into the jungle.

* * * * * * *

The scene had again faded from the dreamer's eyes; yet its memory lingered clear, as Cecil Kensley awoke cold and shivering from his sleep. The fire burned low, the room was in darkness

"Gad! what a curious dream!" he said to himself, as he rose stiffly from his lounge chair. "I never felt so cold in my life" By the dim low firelight he made his way to a corner of the room, touched a button and switched on the electric light. The room in an instant assumed its normally bright and cheerful aspect. First putting some coals upon the fire, Kensley went to the sideboard, poured himself out a liqueur glass of brandy, and drank it down. "That's better," he said to himself. "I must have slept a deuce of a time. Can't think why I got so cold" He turned and looked at the clock. "Half-past seven, by Jove! I must dress sharp these fellows will be here directly."

First opening a door into an adjoining room, where he saw the dinner-table already prepared, he went to his bedroom and quickly dressed. He returned just in time to welcome his friends, who arrived almost simultaneously.

Of the three guests, two were Englishmen—average types of their race; the other a dark, good-looking foreigner, of engaging manners. Barreto, as they called him, spoke excellent English, and seemed to have a perfect knowledge of all topics—mainly pertaining to racing, matters theatrical, and cards—which came uppermost in the course of the evening. During the five minutes before dinner was announced one of the visitors caught sight of the tusk standing in the corner of the room.

"Hallo, Kensley!" he said, "what's this? Something new, isn't it?"

"Yes," returned his host; "it's a big tooth I came across in the warehouse lately. On the whole, it's about the finest bit of ivory I ever saw, and so, as such specimens grow scarcer every year, I collared it. Makes a nice ornament, doesn't it?"

"Magnificent!" rejoined Barreto, who had meanwhile approached, and was intently examining the tusk "I've seen a good many tusks in my time, but I have never seen the fellow of this."

"Why, where did you pick up your knowledge of ivory, Barreto?" asked Kensley. "I knew you were up to most things, but I didn't know that you were a judge of elephants' teeth."

"Well, you see," returned Barreto, "my family have had to do with Africa for between two and three hundred years Several of them have left their bones there. I served as a lieutenant with the Portuguese troops in Mozambique when I was a youngster. After that I came home what you call invalidish—no, invalided—

"Poker was started."

with fever; and, as I didn't intend Africa to have *my* bones, I left the army and went into diplomacy."

"I see!" replied Kensley "Well, that tusk," patting the great tooth affectionately, "must have been once something of a neighbour of yours. It came from behind Mozambique or Sofala. The elephant that carried it has, I take it, been dead many a long year. From the look of the ivory, and the way it's been preserved, I should imagine that tooth has lain in some chief's hut for scores of years. Possibly it has been some cherished fetish. It could tell some tall stories, I'll bet, if it could speak. But come along, you fellows: here's dinner at last."

The four men strolled into the pleasant ruby-lighted dining-room, sat themselves at the sparkling table, and for an hour devoted themselves heartily to excellent viands and wine, and to the exchange of much merry conversation.

At a quarter to ten, after some lingering over cigars and coffee, the party returned to the drawing-room, where card tables were laid. Two other men came in, and "poker" was started. The fortunes of the game waxed and waned, as they will do; but somehow, half-hour after half-hour, the luck ran dead against Barreto. It was easy to see that the Portuguese was a skilful and a smart player, yet, do what he would, bluff boldly or lie low, he steadily lost.

"Hullo, Barreto!" said one of the men to him, in a short pause for brandies-and-soda, "what's up with you? You couldn't go wrong last week. To-night your luck's dead out."

"Yes," replied the Portuguese, who throughout the play had retained his equanimity, and lost with a good grace, "there's something mysterious in the air to-night. I have felt a great depression ever since I came into this room. I can't

tell you why. I felt better at dinner, but back here again I'm wrapped in a wet blanket. A change of weather coming, I suppose. A man who's had African fever can generally foretell it"

The play went on for another half-hour, by which time, as the clock chimed the quarter past one, Barreto had lost between £30 and £40. Kensley's English guests now rose to go, laughingly promising Barreto and their host, who also had lost some £20, their revenge on a future occasion. After a parting libation the two men lighted cigars and cigarettes, and left the flat.

Kensley turned to Barreto. "Feel like an hour's *écarté?*" he interrogated.

"By all means," answered the Portuguese, with a pleasant smile.

Kensley brought out fresh cards, and the two sat down facing one another, the table between. It seemed at *écarté* that Barreto could not lose. The stakes were heavy, and Kensley's deficit began to mount up ominously. He was a practised player, and well used to the ups and downs of card luck; yet, easy as was his manner, a looker-on might have noticed a grimmer and graver look deepening about the lines of his mouth.

Suddenly Kensley sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing, his face flushed with anger.

"You damned cheat!" he gasped, throwing down his cards. "For a long time I couldn't believe my eyes, but there's no other word for it—you're a common swindler. I saw you pass that card"—pointing to a king—"I've seen you doing the same thing before. Not one cent will you get out of me. Leave my rooms, and take care neither I nor my friends ever see the face of you again. If we do there'll be trouble"

At first, as the Englishman blurted out his indignation—which, it may be said at once, was perfectly honest and deserved—Barreto attempted, with a gesture of courteous deprecation, to offer explanations. At last he obtained speech. "You are mistaken, utterly mistaken," he said calmly. "I think you must be mad. Anyhow I have won this money fairly, and I demand it. If you don't pay, I shall make the fact public."

"You damned villain!" gasped Kensley: "get out of my rooms at once, before I put you out."

The expression upon Barreto's face changed now instantly from a plausible calm to one of wild and deadly hate. He saw that Kensley was firm, and not to be played upon. He glanced round the room. As ill luck would have it, there hung, among other trophies upon the wall near him, an Indian knife in its sheath. In an instant Barreto grasped the handle, drew the knife flashing from its cover, and turned upon Kensley. "Now, Mr. Kensley," he said, with a very unpleasant look upon his face, "you will pay me that £55, and withdraw what you just now said, or take the alternative."

Few Englishmen care for knife play: unlike the men of southern Europe, they seem to have an instinctive horror of the weapon. Kensley little liked the job: the adversary before him looked very evil—far more evil than he could ever have imagined him; yet, being a man of courage and of action, he took the only course that seemed at the moment open to him. He flung himself in a flash upon Barreto, trying to seize the man's arm before he should strike. He was not quick enough to avoid the blow: the keen knife ripped through his smooth shirt front, and penetrated the upper part of his chest, just under the collar-bone. Kensley's fighting blood was now up; the wound, though a nasty one, was not disabling; he grappled with Barreto, forced his right arm and dagger behind his back, and then, twining his right leg round his opponent's, put forth all his strength and threw him, falling upon him as he did so. The room was thickly carpeted, and the fall, though a heavy one, made no great noise. The Portuguese gave a choking cry, and shuddered,

"A horrible fear dawned upon the Englishman."

as Kensley thought, very strangely. Barreto had ceased struggling from the instant he fell, and, in a strangely altered voice, gasped once in Portuguese, "I am a dead man" Kensley cautiously released his grip, he feared treachery—some trick. But Barreto moved no more. One glance he gave as Kensley rose; his eyes rolled, then he lay quite still. A horrible fear dawned upon the Englishman. He gently lifted the man, and looked at his back. The right arm lay listless now, and had released its grip of the knife. Alas! that long knife, fashioned by some cunning artificer for wild hill men, so keen and deadly for the taking of life, had done its work. By some ghastly misfortune, it had penetrated the ribs and pierced Barreto's heart. The man lay there, flabby and inert,—as Kensley soon convinced himself, dead beyond all hope of recovery.

As Kensley rose, and with a sickening feeling at his heart surveyed the dead man's face, something in its appearance touched a chord of memory. "Great God!" he said to himself, "is it reality, or am I still dreaming? This is the face of the Portuguese soldier I saw as I sat asleep before the fire this evening!" His eye wandered from the dead man's face to the great yellow tusk gleaming there still and silent in the corner of the chamber. As he looked, a new light seemed to leap into his mind. Again he saw, as in a flash, before the eye of memory, those strange scenes in the African forest

Now, whether it was coincidence, fate, black magic—call it what you will—the

ivory tusk standing there in the corner of that silent room, now a chamber of death and horror, was the tusk of the elephant seen by Kensley in his singular dream—vision it might rather be called—of that fateful evening. The name of the dead man upon the carpet there was Manoel Barreto. The name of the Portuguese captain whom Kensley had in his dream seen slain by the single-tusked elephant more than two hundred years agone, was Manoel Barreto too. The one was a lineal descendant of the other. Zingesi's death was again avenged. All this, however, Cecil Kensley, as he stood there haggard and white-faced, knew not—he only surmised dimly some part of it.

The clock chimed out two in soft, resonant tones. Kensley went to the spirit-stand, poured out some brandy in a tumbler and drank it down. Then he touched the electric bell. His man came to the door, heavy-eyed and sleepy. At sight of Barreto's body, the scattered cards upon the floor, his master's shirt-front soaked in blood, he turned ghastly pale and opened his mouth to make exclamation.

"Thompson," said his master, "there has been terrible work. Go into the street and fetch a policeman and a doctor."

Pressing a handkerchief to his wound, he sank into a chair as his man went forth upon the errand.

The great tusk, the key to that grim tragedy, still gleamed there behind him, inscrutable, cold and majestic; its history of blood not yet ended.

H. A. Bryden.

THE BURIAL OF HOPE.

(Suggested by Sir Edward Burne Jones' Picture "Love among the Ruins.")

HOPE is dead, and in her place
Anguish paints with untaught hand
In the heart and in the face.

Crude her skill, but yet we see,
Clear as ne'er before, the truth,
Hope is dead to you and me.

Duty calls us; let us go.
Death is not for you and me:
On this earth 'tis ever so.

Bury deep our silent pain,
For, whate'er the world may say,
Hope will never live again.

Violet Defries.

THE WEE BOY-ANGEL.

A WEE Boy-Angel lay flat on the golden floor of Heaven, trying to fit his bright little eye close to one of the Star-peepholes. The Star peepholes are dotted all over the floor for the Guardian Angels to look through, to see who has been pinching or pin-pricking the earth-babies when they hear them cry.

Little Boy-Angel thought it would be good fun to peep through too, like the grown-up Angels, and find out what was on the other side. So he lay there, kicking the air with his heels and the golden floor with his toes, keeping time to a Te Deum some Angels were practising a little distance off, and humming the melody of it softly to himself.

At first, looking out of his own happy light into the darkness on the downward side, little Boy-Angel could see nothing. But he soon grew used to the murkiness, and began to be able to see farther and farther.

The first thing he made out was a tiny lark, soaring so high that it seemed coming quite near to him and Heaven, and singing a song as it came that little Boy-Angel thought as sweet as the hymn he was listening to. Then he put his lips closer down to his Star-peephole and sang back to it—little bits of the Angels' song. And the lark rested on its wings to listen, and thought the song so sweet that it never sang again without warbling out the fragments it had caught of the Boy Angel's singing. And, often afterward, as the lark sang, men stayed to listen. And as they listened they smiled, and as they smiled their hearts grew lighter and purer. But they never guessed that the sweet joyousness of the song was caught from the Te Deum of the Angels, that the wee Boy-Angel had taught it.

Then lower down he saw the spires of the churches pointing every one to Heaven, and he smiled and clapped his hands. And while he was smiling, a sunbeam glinted the gilt cross at the point of one, and it flashed and sparkled the light of hope into the soul of a weary climber.

Still lower he saw a man and woman kneeling by a tiny mound in the churchyard, and the woman was weeping. Then the wee Boy-Angel's face grew sorrowful, and he pulled all the petals off some little Heaven daisies he had been

playing with And, kissing them all "Good-bye," he squeezed them through his Star-peephole, and told them to fall just where the father and mother were crying And as they fell on the little grave their tender fragrance cheered the weepers; and, taking root, they grew and bloomed—bloomed into a flower so sweet and strange

"A wee Boy-Angel lay flat on the golden floor."

that every one said, "Surely God must have sent baby's Guardian Angel to plant it, and surely Guardian Angels must tend it every night while we are sleeping." But not all of them fell so close, for the wind caught some and burned them away, and two stray sunbeams caught others and coaxed them out of their course But

"He saw a man and woman kneeling by a tiny mound."

wherever they fell, they rooted and bloomed, and earth grew sweeter with their fragrance.

Presently, as he watched, he saw a group of children playing in a dirty street. Some with bare toes, and little or nothing of bonnet or frock, were playing jolly

games with the mud in the gutter But two of the little midgets, too forlorn even to enjoy the mud, were sitting on the kerbstone, crying with the cold. Little Boy-Angel pulled at his own pretty white robes, in the hope that perhaps they too might be rumpled thro' the Star-peephole. But it wouldn't do—he couldn't struggle himself out of them anyhow. Then he thought of his own little shoulders and wings, with their fluffy feathers and their soft white down So he tugged away with all his Angel-Baby might—without thought or care how it hurt—till his chubby little fists were full. Then he blew and blew feather after feather, and fluff after fluff, till the soft white down was falling like snow. And some fell

"She helped him on to his little feet."

straight upon the group of little children, and they stopped both tears and playing to catch the soft white "snow" as it fell, and to wonder over its soft downiness. And as it fell on them, they grew warm and glad again, and fell to singing Nursery Rhymes and telling each other wonderful Fairy Tales And the wind and the sunbeams joined in again, to catch the fluttering feather-flakes as they fell. And as they whirled them away, they fell here and there on the hearts of men and women shivering with the chills of life, and wherever they fell they left the cosy warmth of Love.

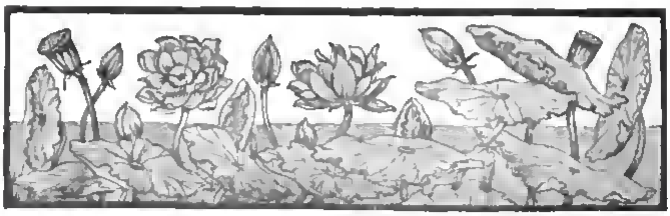
Then the wee Boy-Angel looked again, and saw a tall man leaning wearily against the railings of a public park His head was buried on his arms and his

form shaken with suppressed sobs. And the wee Boy Angel knew that the tall man was too weary with disappointment to go farther, and too sorrowful to go home. He could get no work, and had no money to take home to buy bread or coals for his little children, whose little faces were pinched with hunger and blue with cold. Then the wee Boy Angel forgot all about his Star-peephole and the wonderful new world he had been looking at, and buried his head on his fat little arms and began to cry too, as if his very heart would break, for pitiful sympathy. And the big tears rolled down, and followed the way of the flowers and feathers through the Star-peephole. And one fell where the man was standing, and rested on his coat-sleeve. A sunbeam kissed the tear, and shone into it, till it glistened. And when he raised his head, and saw the rainbow gleaming in it, he took fresh heart, and hoped again for sunshine. And another tear fell, and glistened on a winter rosebud that nestled in the great coat of a gentleman passing by. And as it glistened there, it carried a new pulse of tender pitying love to his heart; and he touched his brother-man upon the shoulder, and they walked on together. But that night the father took home honestly earned bread; and his little children laughed over the happy supper, and went to sleep, to dream happy dreams.

But when the wee Boy Angel cried so, the grown-up Angels who were practising the new Te Deum close by, stopped, and one of them ran off to comfort him at once. She helped him on to his little feet again, and asked him where his flowers and toys had gone, and what had hurt his shoulders and rumpled his robes? And he sobbed out all about the Star-peephole and what he had seen through it. And she took him in her arms to carry him away to the KING OF HEAVEN, who wipes away all tears from off all faces. And as she looked at him, she thought, "How like to the Christmas-Love Angel he has grown!" And as she passed the other Angels, one of them said, "How like he grows to the Holy Christ-Child!" And another whispered, "How our wee Boy Angel grows like the Son of God!" to one standing near him, who answered, "Yes, even as the Son of God is ever the express image of the Father of Love."

But when she brought him to the King of Heaven, He took the wee Boy-Angel in His arms and said, "And Love is of God, for God is Love."

MARION ELLISTON.



THE SHADOW BETWEEN.

I.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies.
Love never dies, Love never dies."

"FOR better, for worse, for richer, for poorer; in sickness, and in health; to love, cherish and obey, till Death us do part." And the man and woman stood hand in hand. They vowed it prayerfully, pledged it faithfully, accepted it trustfully. Friends looked on and sighed. The angels showered down sweet dreams and noble ideals. The Father of Love smiled. And all life stretched away a bloom of flowers.

II.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies,
And the days must set and rise."

It is autumn now, and chill evening. The strong man shivers as he stands upon the shore. The woman stands beside him, but she seems not to notice the cold, nor that he throws a warm wrap round her. Rain-clouds are rising out of the sea, but she seems not to see them.

III.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies,
And the sea tides fall and rise."

A shadow lies between the man and the woman. She, kneeling on the ground, is peering into it, with face all aglow with light from the torch she is holding in the hand that but lately lay in that of the man. He is standing beyond the shadow, but she notices not that she holds the torch too low to light him, as she leans forward on the ground. The shadow is only an earth-mist that has gathered densely round

a tiny cradle. The cooing and the crying absorb the woman, and she raises nor smile nor torchlight to the man beyond the shadow. She seems warm and glad where she kneels, for the cradle (tiny as it is) and the earth-mist screen her from the cold wind that is sweeping up, and the torch glimmers brightly around her. Again and again the man turns longingly to the woman and the child, but the light is away from him, and the woman heeds him not, nor notices that the darkness and the chill enwrap him. The shadow grows denser between them. The man shivers as he stands alone.

IV.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies,
And the storm waves fall and rise,"

and the man walks on alone. The billows break round his feet in angry surge as, Time-driven, he staggers pauselessly on, blinded by the spray and deafened by the breakers. Ever and anon he turns, straining to catch a glimpse of the flickering torchlight through the darkness,—wondering if yet the woman may have noticed how the mist has grown between them, if perchance she may be looking for him, perchance be holding the torch to light him homewards. Ever and anon he stretches out his arms to where last he saw it, before driving winds had carried him out of its reach awaywards. Ever and anon a moan escapes him, and his face has grown old and lined and worn. On and on he struggles, alone in the silence.

V.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies.
Love never dies! Love never dies!"

In a pause between the cooing and the crying and the needing of the child, the woman looks up startled. She remembers the man. She notices that the torch is lighting only herself and the child. She recalls his wrapping a warm wrap around her when she first knelt there. She staggers to her feet with a frightened, awakened look. Is he alone? Is she? And they once walked hand in hand! She raises the torch to look for him, but the mist and the shadow lie thick between.

VI.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies.
Love never dies! Love never dies!"

The woman hurries on. She raises the torch higher,—ever pursuing, ever seeking. She feels the chill of the winter wind, the damp of the night solitude. Ever and anon she calls him, but the winds beat back her call. Ever and anon she cries, but the breaking waves drown her cry. She struggles on to overtake him, but strength flags and hope dies. Ever the mist lies thick between, and the bitterness of aloneness is upon her,—but the torch burns brighter and brighter.

VII.

"Time flies dear heart, time flies,
And the sea-tides fall and rise."

Ever and anon the woman turns to ask passing travellers if they have seen the man she is seeking. One and another tell her of one who passed that way alone, stern

and sad, fighting the darkness as he went, his hair lying damp upon his forehead, his face set, as though he battled with suffering. A woman, sweet and gentle, takes her hand, whispering "Let me help you call,—he is so lonely till he hear you." And as she calls "Friend! friend! Love never dies, Love never dies," it echoes far away over the land and over the sea. And travellers hearing it, not seeing her, hold it a fragment of the angels' song, floating down to cheer them with a whisper from God,—but it never reaches the man. A man, strong and pitying, says, "Let me call too: I am strong and you are aweary,—perhaps my voice will reach him." He calls "Brother! brother! Love never dies, Love never dies!" And the call carries new hope to every traveller who hears. But there is no answer from the man on before. In that wild storm he cannot hear! The woman moans on, "Too late! Too late! Repenting too late." But the torch burns brighter, and she holds it higher as she seeks him.

VIII.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies,
And the sea tides fall and rise"

Fellow-travellers turn to watch her as she struggles on, and strain their eyes in search of the man. Some pity, some blame. Some few sorrow for him, some few for her. One cries, "Why does he not come back to her?" another, "Why did she let him go?" One cries, "Unquenchable love!" another, "Natural law of sowing and reaping!" One cries mournfully, "How sorrowful! Another failure!" another hopefully, "Faith and love *will* reach him!" Some stand aside indifferent, being too busy to help and too happy to care! The most of them, being neither great in thought nor noble in feeling, ejaculate, "I told you so,—you see I was right!" The few who think higher and feel deeper say, "How inevitably sure is consequence!" Then, having said their say, and shrugged their shoulders to the fulfilment of decent conventionality, they pass on, and—forget.

But the angels who watch and listen, who think and suffer, who live and conquer, and who never forget, look pitifully down and say, "How inevitable is the triumph of Love!"

IX.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies,
And the sad sea sobs and sighs."

Softly and tenderly guiding angels whisper to the woman: "The man you seek is kneeling by a child's grave. You can find him there. It is but shadow between you—a shadow so narrow that outstretched hands may pierce it and clasp each other!"

Not yet! not yet! She kneels beside the tiny grave, so close to the sorrowful man, who is groping with straining eyes and outstretched arms for her. But she sees him not through the shadow, and she drops her torch to the ground once more, as her head sinks down with convulsing sobs on the little mound. The mist of her own tears blinds her, that she cannot see him kneeling on the other side, in anguish deeper, in aloneness more desolate than her own. Her wild yearning for one more clasp of the baby arms, and one more pressure of the baby kisses, shuts out all thought of the sorrowful man, hungering with a passionate hunger, not only for the baby prattle that is silenced, but, too, for the woman love that seems buried with it.

The woman kneels on weeping. The man struggles on suffering. So near—that hands could have clasped and held for ever—but the torch had dropped too low to guide aright, and Time swept them apart. And the shadow grew denser and denser.

X.

"Time flies, dear heart, time flies
Love never dies, Love never dies!"

The rain-clouds lie low over the land, the mist and the shadow enwrap the earth in mis-shaping darkness.

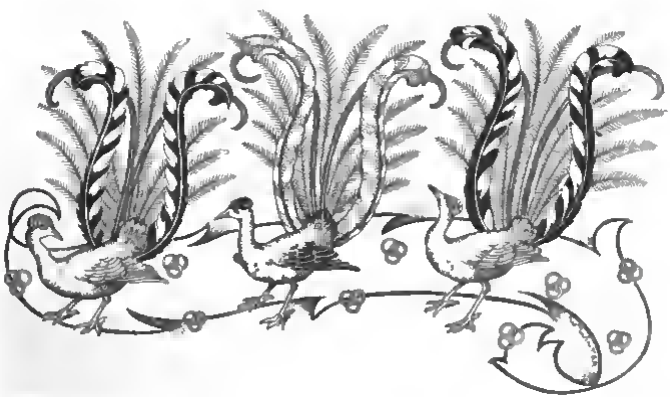
The man and the woman go on alone. The man has ceased to struggle now. His outstretched arms have dropped wearily; his eyes have ceased straining to catch a glimmer of that torchlight. Benumbed and hopeless he staggers on—on and on till the end shall come.

The woman too has ceased weeping. Her dry tearless eyes are pitiful in their silent despairing misery. The bitter self-reproach that swept overwhelmingly over her, as again and again she aroused to find her opportunities lost and her torch burning too low to glimmer to the man she loved, is hushed now to a mute, pulseless pain. But the torch burns on, never fed, yet never failing.

The angels watch yearningly. And the Father of Love smiles wooingly as He whispers, "Poor tired children! they shall rest awhile in My arms, where there is no room for shadows in between, and they will awake in unhindered Love!"

And the shadow fled away.

MARION ELLISTON.



IT was after midnight! And after midnight, even on Christmas Eve, most men sleep. There were still a few of the Christmas holiday late trains, to shriek their way into the railway stations, and discharge their wondrous miscellany of overcoats and portmanteaus; a few railway porters were yet on duty, reaping a rich harvest of "tips" from the home-comers, or the friends waiting to welcome them; a few cabbies were still waiting, hoping to pick up some late "fare"; a few Post Office uniforms still struggled in the fog and the lamplight with a vast collection of mail bags, hampers, and "Parcels Post" baskets, a few houses, here and there, were still brilliantly lighted, where gay dancers yet danced in reckless forgetfulness that the Christmas season is the "Go and do-thou-likewise" festival, in memory of the Unselfish One who "went about doing good"; a few drunken brawlers, here and there, straggled home, untouched as yet by the love and the purity and the sorrow of the Holy Child, while here and there a group of carollers carolled sweet echoes of the first Peace anthem into the stillness of the night, and into the hush of the human hearts that woke to listen. Yet, for all this, those that woke were few, compared with those that slept.

Most of the Christmas preparations were made, most of the Christmas surprises were ready. The brown-paper parcels were tied up and labelled, the mince-pies and the turkeys were ready, the Christmas trees were dressed. The Daddies and Muvvers who, a few hours ago, had stood together outside the toyshops, consulting to the full as to whether Baby would love a white furry monkey or a black nigger dolly the most—whether Jack would best enjoy a box of bricks or a ship—had gone home and emptied the bulged-out pockets into the proper number of little socks and stockings, and were sleeping now, to allow Santa Claus undisturbed use of the chimney or the keyhole! Most of the tears over the purses that wouldn't run to dollies and monkeys, to warm petticoats and mittens, to mince-pies and apples,—most of the tears over the empty places where it was no use to lay the warm shawl, over the little socks it was no use to fill, were hushed, for awhile at

least, by the God who "giveth His beloved sleep" in their heartache and sorrow And the moon gleamed, and the stars shone, over a world, a busy world, hushed from its busyness into sleep.

Yes, most of the Christmas preparations were complete. Most of the Christmas preparation angels had already gone home. They had carried all their Christmas messages, they had stirred their love into the full number of Christmas puddings that had been sent to those for whom nothing was prepared. They had suggested all their "good plans," and whispered all their "kind thoughts." They had assisted at every stocking-filling, tree-dressing, and parcel-tying. Some of them (too many!) had gone home sad and disappointed, and God grew sad and disappointed too, as they told of the many refusals they had had from those whom they had asked to help God send round His Christmas love and gifts. But He whispered to them, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do They knew not that you were angels, and that the messages were Mine. My children are so slow to recognise"

And then, through the starshine, He sent down the last of His Christmas heralding angels,—that chosen one by whom He always sends those special messages to be whispered to men in their sleep on Christmas Eve. They stir in their sleep as the angel whispers, and their dream becomes all peace; but when they wake in the morning they rarely guess that it was the holy angel giving them God's Christmas kiss, that gave the peace they woke with; like the little child in its cot, that smiles and stretches out its little arms in its sleep, as it *feels* its mother's kiss, and yet is all unknowing of her nearness. The messages he had to carry were many: some of them were God's own compensations to some of His children whom one and another of His more happily circumstanced children had refused to minister to,—many remain uncompensated, and the wail of their uncomforted sorrow, their unministered-to need, rising to the heart of God, is laid to the charge of His elect, who withheld the message they were charged with. Many of them, however, were the special love-messages God chose to send direct to His children Himself instead of through His other children!

The angel paused first beside a sleeping woman—toilworn and weary There were no Christmas stockings hanging near the three little sleepers that made those two little rooms home. It had been such a bad week for work: every one had been out, buying Christmas presents, when she took her sewing home, and she had had to come away without the money; and so—and so—there was not even a sprig of holly to make the room look like Christmas to the children. And she had cried herself to sleep, sore-hearted and hungry for the love and help and comfort of the breadwinner, that used to manage so much better! And the holy one smoothed out the pillows, and signed the cross of patient endurance upon her brow. He whispered his message softly to her, and passed on. What he whispered no one ever knew, but in the morning—somehow things were different. The little ones were good! they didn't all cry to be dressed at the same time: and they didn't all make their pinafores dirty as soon as they were put on clean. and they didn't upset their bread-and-milk on the best table-cloth, that had come out as the only celebration of Christmas Day, nor quarrel for the same toy! Nothing went crooked, and nothing fretted her; but she didn't know it was the angel that had left the peace, when he smoothed her pillow—she didn't even know he had been there.

Then he came where a little child was sleeping. He brushed back the thick clustering hair, and signed the cross of daily suffering in kisses on the blue-veined forehead, and the boy smiled and dreamed! Next day, as he lay on his sofa, the hours didn't seem so long and weary, and he was able to forget the pain in his

"He sent down the last of His Christmas-heralding angels."

"Then he came where a little child was sleeping."

back while he lost himself for awhile in his new volume of *St. Nicholas*, and the lump didn't come in his throat once, all the time his brothers were out skating. The cross shone there upon his brow beneath those clustering curls all the rest of his short life, and the angels knew it was the sign of the Cross-bearing One's followers; but he never told any one, not even his mother, the message from God that the gentle angel had whispered into his dream.

Then he passed into a prison, and stood beside the narrow bed where a well-built, regular-featured man was lying. The visiting regulations do not exclude God and His angels,—God chooses to be there always, and the angels know every nook and corner of Holloway and Portland, with their every temptation and sorrow, as well as they know each saint-filled niche of our great St. Paul's, with its unwritten record of prayer and sacrifice. They often make notes in the chaplain's memorandum book, but *never* refer to the authorities' records for information, much of which is never sanctioned by their signature. He stood watching the man for awhile, and

"Then he came where a little street arab was curled up

sighed sorrowfully. Then he knelt beside him, and prayed an angel's prayer. Rising, he leaned over him, and tenderly gave him his Father's kiss of forgiveness, and, signing the cross of penitence on his brow, turned away. The man dreamed on, and saw his mother in his dream. He saw himself as a tiny child, kneeling in her arms to lisp out the "Our Father," and "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," and "Pray God, take care of me all through the dark night." When the morning dawned, he had learned how dark the night had been, and that God had taken safe care of him all through it. When he went in to prayers, the chaplain saw something in his face he had never noticed there before. He reproached himself for judging "No. 74" harshly, and for his faithless despair of the Good Shepherd's leading back His wandering flock to the home-pastures, for he knew that God had met him, and given him a new heart—the heart of a little child. He thanked God, and took courage!

Next he paused at a rich merchant's bedside. The cares of this world had choked the rich, generous pulses of his nature, and the stifling atmosphere of his counting-house and his ledgers had dulled and blunted him. Even in his sleep he looked cold and hard. But the Father of Love will not have it so,—least of all at Christmas time, and the Love-angel stood beside him and gently grasped the wrist that lay outside the coverlet. Very patiently he held it, till his own love-pulses throbbed through the sleeping man and his face grew less set. Then, smiling, he stooped and whispered God's message into his dream, and stole softly away. In his dream the merchant saw again the little child selling violets, that he had turned from without helping as he came out of his office that afternoon,—the "poor relation" whose letter he had voted a bore, and unhesitatingly replied to with a curt refusal,—the vicar's appeal for funds for the Christmas gifts for the poor, and his polite evasion of it. He saw it all, but with God's love pulsing again in his soul things looked different,—and in the early morning he woke with a new resolve. He dressed early, and stood ready to go with his wife to the early Christmas Communion. After the Benediction, as she was still kneeling beside him, she saw him take a bank-note from his pocket-book—his love-offering to God; and she was glad! As they came down the aisle together he slipped it quietly into her hand and whispered softly, "Put it into the poor box at the door, dear."

On the way home she put her arm in his and said, "This makes it such a happy Christmas! We have only been *there* together twice—once on the first Sunday after we were married, and once again soon after baby came."

He smiled and said, "Well, it shall never be so long again, precious one."

And she was a woman wise enough not to tease him with questions.

At the vicarage breakfast that morning the vicar said, "And do you know, dear, that —— was at church with his wife this morning. He hasn't been to Holy Communion for years! *Laus Deo!*"

But the angel had passed on to where another man was sleeping. There were lines of care upon his brow, and his face looked worn and haggard. There were streaks of grey in his hair, and his hand was white and thin, though he looked scarcely as if Nature had long put away his boyhood. But life goes hard with some men. They strain and strive, but circumstances are dead against them. An employer's death, a winter of pleurisy and bronchitis, an investment of the little "all" of capital that fails,—these things set a man fighting life at terrible odds, when there is a delicate wife and hungry little ones at home. The man turned uneasily in his sleep, and murmured, "Give us this day our daily bread," and the angel dropped a tear for the pity of it. He knew the man was hungry—hungry for actual bread, undreaming of such vain luxuries as butter or meat (they were little but

"And in her dream she felt the little arms."

"memories" now)—and hungrier still for the daily work that would honourably earn it. The angel laid his hand upon that brow, smoothed out its furrows, and whispered the message the Father-love of God had sent. The man slept on, but when he woke he was brave enough to trust God again, and fight on.

Then he came where a little street arab was curled up under an archway, cuddling close all his earthly belongings, which consisted mainly of a little brother to be provided for, a mangy but faithful terrier, and a basket of hearthstone, matchboxes, and bootlaces. Clenched tight in his rather grubby little fist was a penny and two halfpennies,—his provision for Christmas-day fare! In the only pocket of his ragged coat was an orange a fruit-shop woman had given him (and the kindliness was accounted to her for righteousness), and he was treasuring it up for the little one's Santa Claus surprise in the morning. The angel smiled over the protecting brother-love that kept him warm, despite all lack of blanket to screen off the night air. He wrapped the torn coat closer round him, and sent him dreams of noble, unselfish manhood, and blessed him with the children's blessing as he said, "For of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

Then he came where a father and mother were sleeping, and an empty cot stood beside their bed. There was no tiny sock to fill, no baby prattle to listen for, no baby toys to put ready. Away in the cemetery there was a tiny grave, with a few Christmas roses freshly placed there, but here there was nothing save hush and stillness and hungry heartache. The tears were still wet upon the mother's cheek, for she had cried herself to sleep, crying for the little one that the Good Shepherd had taken out of her arms into His own. And the comforting angel saw the photograph of the little face, with its nimbus of clustering curls, and the little vase of violets beside it, and said softly, "Their angels do always behold the face of our Father." Then he whispered God's comfort, and God's cure for loneliness and heartache, into her dream, and turned away. And in her dream she felt the little arms of not one, but of crowds of little angel-babies twining round her neck, and their soft cheeks gently rubbing against hers in loving caress. And when she woke, she had learned that she would find her own little angelled baby and the Holy Christ Child in every little one she served or smiled to. And so she smiled again to every little child she met, and blessed them,—and forgave God for taking away her only one.

He came again to another one, to whom God had given every earthly joy, but in her joys she had forgotten His other children—the joyless ones outside. And the reminding angel touched her forehead lightly with his wing to brush away the earth-mist of selfishness that was enwrapping her, and breathed God's message of reminding and recalling into her dream. In her dream she saw herself wandering wearily up and down the earth, trying to find one soul whom she had blessed or cheered or helped, to witness that she had at least once done a noble or useful or kind deed, and she sought all in vain. She saw herself looking through a great pile of past actions, trying to find even one labelled "Unselfish," but she found them all, one after another, labelled "Society's claim," "Conventional religiosity," "Ostentatious parade," and she buried her head in shame and despair. When she awoke she sent joys to the sorrowful, food to the hungry, help to the unhelped, and a new joy stole into her heart, and God's smile shone on her life.

Yet one more he sought. He came where a tired woman was sleeping. The fire had flickered itself out, as the joys had done out of her life. Her hair was quite white, and her frame frail and feeble, but she was quite alone. The grown-up children had all gone, one by one, to their own homes—some abroad, too far to reach her with their comforting care; some nearer home, but more forgetful! She

had missed them all, and all the loving little cares over her so much; but now—well, by this time she had grown used to always having the pain of loneliness and of being forgotten. But even yet the Christmas bells always brought it back overwhelmingly—all the contrast of it with the old Christmases, when Christmas included husband, children, holly, home. Now, in her sleep, the angel heard her moan out "Benjamin, Benjamin." He stooped over her lovingly, comfortingly. But again she called piteously, "Benjamin, Benjamin!" and stretched out two thin wrinkled hands to the Benjamin that had forgotten the mother-love that had never forgotten him. "I had better take her home for God Himself to comfort," the angel said—"home to the Father-love that never forgets!" And he carried her home to God.

* * * * * *

And God had watched His chosen one blessing the sleepers, and as He saw the holier look grow in their faces while the angel stood beside them, He said, "There is joy in the presence of angels."

MARION ELLISTON.

"And he carried her home to God"

THE GHOST IN MY LADY'S BOWER.

COME, ruffle your hair,
Ye maidens fair,
And turn down the light and stir
up the fire;
Draw closer around, and hark, if
ye dare,
To a direful tale of flicker and flare,
Of phantoms in light attire.

The moon shone bright
One Christmas night,
At the ominous ghostly hour,
On a reckless pair
Who dared to be where
The ghouls and sprites have
power.
A castle old,
To demons sold
As the price of a deadly crime,
Frowned terribly grim
With shadows dim
On a spectral pantomime.

The fairies dance
And goblins prance
On the mossy moonlit sward;
The hinges crack
As the doors swing back:
What use is lock or ward?
There's a tee-to-tum,
And a fee-fo-fum,
And an owl in the ivy tower
A lullaby,
And an infant's cry,
And a ghost in My Lady's Bower.

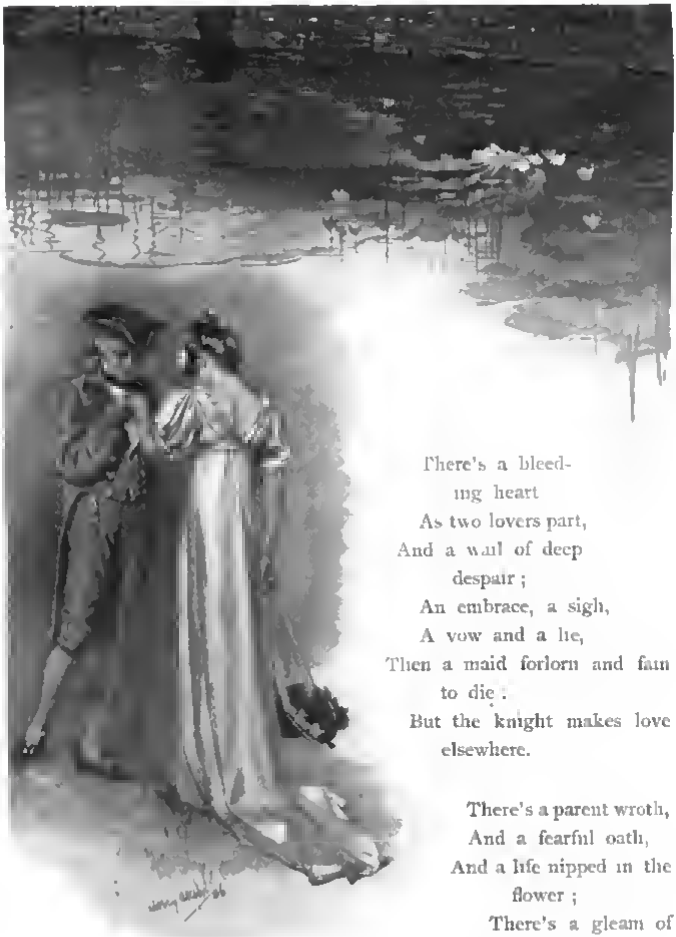
The reckless pair,—
One, a lady fair;
The other, a gallant gay,—
Terrified stand
Hand in hand,
And fain would go their way.

But the demon's spell,
From the midnight bell
Till the first dim rays of dawn,
Will hold them bound
On enchanted ground
To see the graveyards yawn.

The castle-chapel's a weird old place
Half-sunk in long decay.
It holds the bones of a once-proud race,
Whose bodies have rotted away.
The roof is off, there are holes in the wall,
Where the bats have made their nest;
The altar is under the Devil's thrall,
And the dead men have no rest.

The coffins are gaping wide to-night,
The death-bonds loose their hold;
And spectres rise in the blue moonlight
In the forms they had of old.
The spell-bound pair with horrible fear
Behold the scene but all too clear.

Lo! before their eyes
Thin pictures rise,
Which unravel the tangled tale.
Show a dainty dame
Who is brought to shame
By a noble knight of exalted name.
Alas, for my Lady frail!



There's a bleeding heart
As two lovers part,
And a wail of deep despair;
An embrace, a sigh,
A vow and a lie,
Then a maid forlorn and fain to die:
But the knight makes love elsewhere.

There's a parent wroth,
And a fearful oath,
And a life nipped in the flower;
There's a gleam of blood,
And a crimson flood,
And a weighted corse in the slimy mud
In the moat at the foot of the tower.

There's a miser old
Telling his gold :
Naught else to love hath he
There's a terrible dread,
As the metal red
Reflects the hue that sullied the dead ;
And the miser turns to flee.

But the goblins prance
And elfins dance ;
There's an owl in the ivy tower.
There's a lullaby,
And an infant's cry,
And a mother weeping, weeping nigh :
'Tis the ghost in My Lady's Bower.

There's a tee-to-tum,
And a fee-fo-fum,
And a whiff of a sulphurous flame.
There's the crack of doom,
And a fearful boom,
As the sunrise peeps through the ghastly gloom,
And puts foul night to shame.

There's a trembling pair,
Who dared to be where
The ghouls and sprites have sway.
In the morning light
They lose the fright
That held them bound through the awesome night,
But they're glad to go their way.

J. Barnard James.

THE

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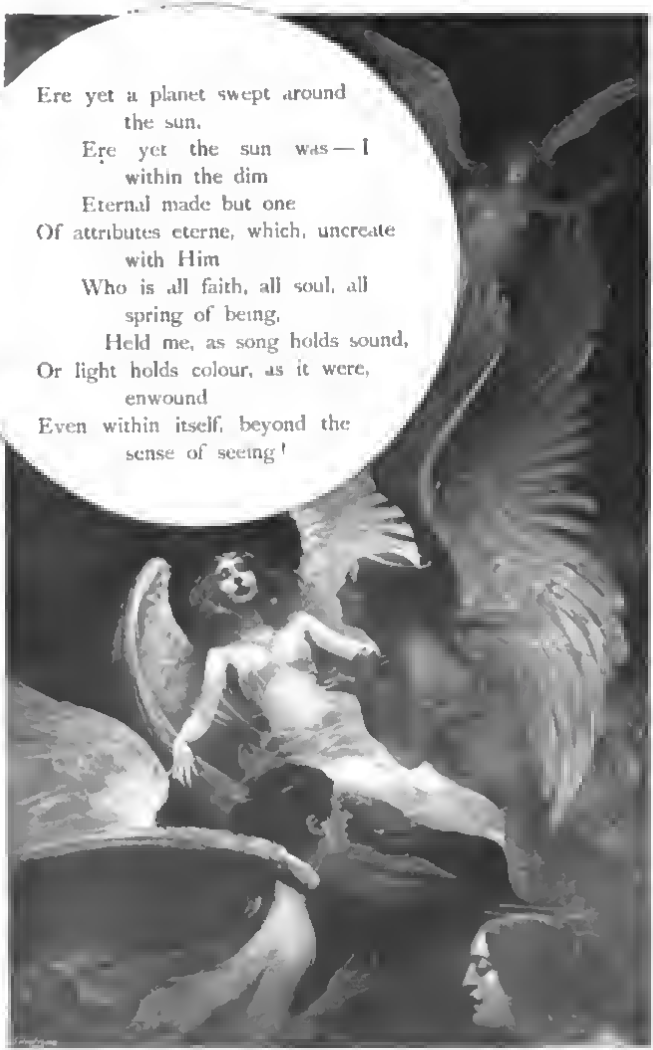
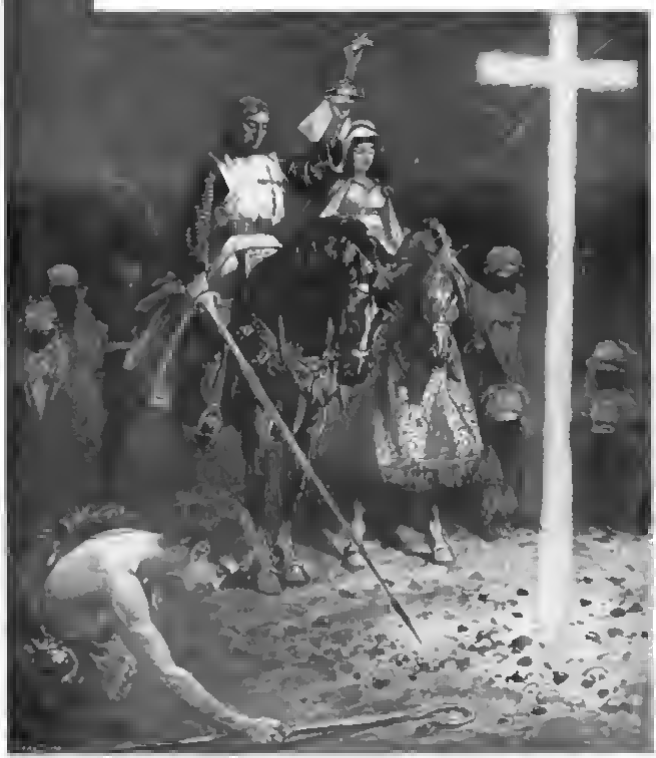
LUX HOMINUM.

WHERE, then, hath Faith her everlasting home?
Pavilioned viewless in the whispering wind,
Or in the sky's blue dome?
Or in the throbbing heart of passionate human kind?
Or in the ancient lap of darkest ocean,
Or in earth's centre deep,
Fed by internal fires and rocked to sleep
In terrene caves within the womb of ceaseless motion?


Ere yet a planet swept around
the sun,
Ere yet the sun was — I
within the dim
Eternal made but one
Of attributes eterne, which, uncreate
with Him
Who is all faith, all soul, all
spring of being,
Held me, as song holds sound,
Or light holds colour, as it were,
enwound
Even within itself, beyond the
sense of seeing!

The universe is mine—for that is He,
And I, all incorruptible, am part
Of pure eternity
To which man lowly kneels with trembling in his heart!
What though all creeds be torn and tempest-driven?
They but the outward form
'Yond which, unruffled by the wildest storm,
Still lives the Faith supreme for which all faith hath striven—



The Faith that gives men sight of things Divine,
That shows them Immortality beyond
Death's thin dividing line!
Dispersing as a dream the vain delusion fond
They hug as Life, which life at best concealing
As with a mist—grows thin
To let Faith's brightness stream rejoicing in
Through infinite knowledge God to mortal man revealing!

J A N

THE BOAT OF DREAMS.

WHERE the faint sea firs ring the sands,
A sudden fitful spark
Is struck by a silent keel that lands,
Unsteered, unsped by rowers' hands,
When the waning moon is dark.

And a boat rocks there of ancient build,
With an empty deck and an idle sail,
That far off midnight airs had filled,
When the landward breezes sink and fail
And the little waves are stilled.

On the night floats out from the laden hold
A scent of the spicy East,
Of treasures from many a land of old,
And western isles where the fabled beast
Keeps guard o'er the apples gold.

Light on the brimming tide she sways,
  And the silvered ropes are thrilled
As the elfin harp of olden days
  That ever its magic music plays
    Untouched by minstrel skilled;

And a voice with an untold message fraught
  Sings on and will not rest;
The sails with changeful hues enwrought
  Swell on the calm as a surcharged breast,
  And yearning strain on the world-wide quest
    Of the boon the heroes sought.

Or ever the magic of that song
  Can win to a listing ear,
It wakes, with a luring spell and strong,
  The heart of youth, till one draws near
    Where the boat has waited long.

Straightly led down the starlit strand
  Comes a foot to dare the deck,
The helm yields to the eager hand
  To steer with never a thought of wreck
    On the track of the hero band

Far on the stream of the tides recall
  To those isles of mystery
Sails the ship with steady topmasts tall,
  Led by the jewelled mockery
Of the Ignis Fatuus of the sea
    On the slumberous rise and fall.

On sinks or sails the fairy bark,
  That waits by the midnight shore,
Who to the magic song should hark
  Has dreamed his dream and returns no more
    When the waning moon is dark!

FRANCES BANNERMAN

DOCTOR ARMSTRONG.

I

COLVIN ARMSTRONG tried to take up his pen with an air of happiness and relief, for it was the last chapter of his great work which he was about to commence. But the effort failed, and he leaned back in his chair, thoroughly tired out—too jaded to be brisk or energetic.

It was not his professional work that tired him. A London surgeon, with a magnificent reputation, he had more than enough to do; but he was only forty, and his constitution was of iron. Work agreed with him; it was thought that utterly prostrated him at times. No sooner was his last engagement fulfilled, or his last patient despatched, than he retired to his library and gave himself up to the great psychological problem that racked his brains. Night brought a short relief: he slept from twelve till six; but morning renewed his wrestlings, and it was only the necessity of attending to his surgery that freed him from the incessant train of thought. Would that his head were as cool as his strong, firm hands!

It was the Mystery of Human Pain that was haunting him. Until two years back he had never given such questions a thought, but then the problem began to force itself upon him. How was it that so many suffered a living martyrdom, whilst he himself never knew a moment's pain? How was it that, having no personal knowledge of pain, he nevertheless felt such an overpowering sympathy with those who suffered, and had such an instinctive inborn gift of giving relief? And then the larger, less personal questions: Was there any guiding hand allotting pain to innocent mortals? Were they really innocent? If there was design in it all, from whom came the design, and what was its purpose? Was it for good, or evil, or both? If no Providence guided humanity, what was the origin of pain? Why was it allowed to be? And so on, in an endless train of thought, one problem suggesting ten others, till the subject broadened out to the doors of Eternity itself, and the mind reeled before its own imaginings.

Armstrong flew to his books for assistance, and primed himself with the ideas of the metaphysicians; but he was not satisfied, and a strong impulse led him to try his own hand at solving the mystery. Gradually, after much hard reading and thinking, he evolved a theory which, though far from satisfactory, seemed ampler and better than the ideas of the old philosophers, and then, slowly and laboriously, he committed it to paper. As the work grew, he became more convinced of the truth which seemed to lurk in his views, the foundation of real discovery on which his theses were based. Something of his marvellous insight into disease and

distortion seemed to have entered into the book, and he was eager to give it to the world.

So this was the last chapter! By Jove! how hot and close the room was! It was annoying to feel so dull and listless, but there was some excuse: nine o'clock at night is not a time when a man is at his freshest, and there was nothing so wearing as this closely woven intellectual work, where every thread had to be followed to its end, every detail thought out, every possible ramification explored, and the mind kept at its highest tension throughout, straining to cover the whole ground and to order in logical sequence its myriad elusive thoughts. Difficult? Why, there was nothing to compare to it! But what was the good of magnifying troubles? Here was the final chapter, the conclusion which was to be so masterly, already mapped out in his mind, only waiting to be transferred to paper. Armstrong wiped his damp forehead, and seized the pen. The room was hot as he liked it,

—The vision came nearer and nearer

with only a lamp casting a subdued light on his desk; the rest in deepest gloom. Now was the time to begin. But he was terribly tired.

* * * * * * *

Kr-rk!

Armstrong leaned back in his chair, and pressed his hand to his head. Something inside seemed to have broken with a snap, or a tiny shutter had fallen away, as in a camera, revealing a hidden lens in his brain. His head was clearer and freer, as if some clogging veil had suddenly been removed, and before his eyes there burned a new light, steady and cold, but brilliant. A cooler, purer air filled the room. The present melted away from his vision . . .

Far away—so far that everything was dwarfed, but yet as distinct in every detail as though it had been close at hand—Armstrong saw a vision.

A dark underground dungeon, with damp standing in beads on its bare stone walls; a man, bound, gagged, and helpless; another, black masked and sullen of movement; a third, seated on a small platform, with his face in shadow. A feeble hanging lamp, swaying to and fro in the draughts of the cell, was the only illumination.

The vision came nearer and nearer, and grew larger as it came, till it reached Armstrong and filled his room, and he felt the dank breath of the dungeon stir his hair. He looked again: the masked man was at his elbow, the man on the dais was above him—unrecognisable in the shadow, but smiling gently; that much he could see. Then he looked at the third man, the prisoner; and a thrill of dread went through him, for he recognised himself,—in old-world, long-forgotten garb, but still himself. And then the whole grew real, with a deadly reality; he was no more a mere spectator, but a part of the vision, and the vision was a part of his own existence. The chill of the room fell on his spirit, filling him with vague, horrible forebodings: the present mingled with the past, and his spirit passed into the limp, helpless figure on the rack. He—he himself, and none other—was the victim in the torture chamber, and the world was black around him.

There was a clank of steel on the floor, as though little instruments had been dropped, and then a sudden sharp pang struck him from an unseen source. Another, another, and yet another,—a very multitude of keen stabbing pangs. In uncontrollable agony he raised his voice to shout with pain, but the gag stopped him, choked him, throttled his curses. And the dark figure smiled from above.

Then came hot, burning, throbbing pains that shot through him, turning the blood in his veins to fire, and gnawing his vitals till they consumed away. He tried to turn, to roll, to ease himself in any way; but he was bound and rigid and helpless, and his efforts only increased the torture. And still the figure sat motionless above him. He turned his streaming eyes upwards in mute appeal, and his answer was a smile.

Then the sharp pains and the burning misery ceased for a while, and his aching limbs rested, and all seemed over. But the presiding fiend waved a silent signal, and worse came—stretching, straining torture, that nearly pulled the wretched frame asunder (well if it had!), and dull grinding agonies, worse than the sharper pains, more cruel and relentless than the stabs or blows or thrusts.

And then the worst of all—the whole in combination. Crushing, grinding, distorting, straining, breaking, bending, blinding, burning, flaying, racking, stabbing—more than the mind can picture or words describe—in turn and together, and all the more horrible, coming unseen and sudden and unawares. Crush and rack and burn and grind, till the brain was on fire and the body groaning under its burdens; till the face was furrowed with tears of agony, the whole frame shapeless and broken, limbs useless, muscles tortured, twisted and crushed, nerves shattered, and the spirit within flaming with miserable, hopeless hate. Madness? No; that had come in the first silent moments of fear and pain, but the cruel hand had driven it away, and now there was only PAIN—deep, unfathomable Pain.

Then came a low whisper, the cool breath of Death waiting softly outside the chamber, and the wounded soul fluttered for a moment in joyous answer. But the human fiend above knew it, and the torture stopped. Sore, blistered, broken, and useless, he was flung aside to endure still longer in his misery, and Death turned sighing away.

* * * * * * *

Armstrong sprang from his chair with curses on his tongue and fury in his heart,

and grasped convulsively at the retreating vision. But it was far, far off, and melting slowly into air.

Then a great calm fell upon him, and he knew what he had seen. It was a scene from a former life—his last existence—and it was vouchsafed to him as a lesson, a glimpse of the everlasting order of life. The inspiration of a great Message glowed on his brow and in his soul. And this was the Message which he read, clear as the words of a seer:—

"For inasmuch as thou hast suffered pain and bitterness of spirit in the past, so shalt thou now know freedom from such; and to thee it shall be given, by thy past sufferings, to discern and make lighter the grievous burdens of thy fellow-men. And the pain that thou hast felt in thy veins shall give thee understanding above all others, that thou mayest cure man's infirmities and heal the sick of his house."

II.

The light of a great revelation dazzled Armstrong for a while, but he rose from it with renewed strength and hope and courage, resolved to devote himself more than ever to the healing art. And first he destroyed his manuscript, for his theories were shattered and forgotten. The mystery of human pain was still unsolved; but was it for him to solve it? Providence had given him another mission,—to heal and cure. And Providence had given him the clue to one mystery, at all events—his own great sympathy with sufferers and insight into suffering. Sometimes he wondered whether another revelation would follow; but none came, and he pursued his usual career, doing good and working hard. The idle speculations, the restless quest of secret things, which had haunted him and wearied him before, were now of the past, and he lived for work alone.

But more was to come—unexpectedly and without warning.

It was an ordinary case he was treating; brain surgery. The man, a wretched creature, suffered severely, and was in a broken state of health; Armstrong had traced it to brain pressure, and saw his way easily to put things right by a cerebral operation. He was just concluding an examination, and the patient lay quietly in the great chair, soothed by a slight injection of morphia. Armstrong turned away to get a light—it was five o'clock on an autumn day, just beginning to grow dark—when suddenly there came that strange grating "Kr-rk" in his head, and he felt the room whirl around him. He clutched hard at a table near him, but it receded from his grasp and he felt himself falling down, down, down in giddy helplessness. Then the movement stopped, and he felt, as before, that some weight had been lifted from his brain, and a new, unused sense developed in him. But this time there was no clear light, no pure air, no vision.

What was coming? Something, he felt, was in store—some strange, new revelation—and he waited eagerly. As the prophets of old were inspired, so light had come to him, and now perhaps he would learn one more secret of the troubled world.

But nothing came; all was blank darkness around him, and an uneasy sense of foreboding stole slowly over him, till his hand shook and his face grew damp with cold sweat.

What was that? A far-off mocking laugh? And . . . O God in heaven! Not *that* again! Not *that*!

He tried to call again, for pangs worse than of death were racking him; but something cold was thrust into his mouth and choked him. And then his eyes, shut tight in the clenched agony of pain, opened again, and he saw the streaming dungeon walls, the swaying lamp, the masked torturer, and the grim shadow-figure.

seated motionless on the dais above him, and his heart sank within him, and he turned sick and faint.

For one brief moment the masked man turned away—to heat his irons, perhaps, or rest his arms, weary of their heavy work—and all Armstrong's spirit went up in one short, agonised, burning prayer, in one deep, strenuous remonstrance.

"I have felt it before," he cried. "I have endured it before, and I know its meaning. Must I go through all again? Have I failed in my duty? Save me from pain and madness before it is too late! O God of cruelty, Pain-giver, merciless, wicked, infernal, save me, save me, preserve me!"

His words, stifled by the gag, reached no human ear; but in the cell a new presence was lurking, and on his face fell a hot, quick breath.

A voice spoke in his ear, very soft and gentle and low.

"You blaspheme in vain," it said: "God has not sent you this vision, but *I*."

III

THE torture was over, and Armstrong waited quietly for the moment of restoration to the world; but it did not come, and a new fear seized him. What if he never recovered from this state? As the Powers of Good had vouchsafed him the first vision, so the Powers of Evil had mocked him with the second—the same as the first, but infinitely more terrible, for through the former a subtle strength of will had sustained him, and he had emerged from it wiser, happier, and stronger, whilst now he felt himself deserted and unaided, and . . . Heavens above! What would come next? The physical torture was over, but now his mind was on the rack, and it was worse, far worse!

The two grim figures remained in the cell, motionless as statues. A strange detachment of mind, a mystic duality of self, was torturing Armstrong. Here he felt the pangs and aching of the most terrible pain, yet at the same time he knew that it was all unreal, and his thoughts turned to the world above—his work, his house, his friends, the very patient in his chair, waiting and wondering. Somewhere between the two lay madness, and his spirit cried for peace—a world all vision, or a world all reality—anything but this perplexing, torturing union of the two.

Quick as thought came the answer. "Look around before you go!"

It was the soft voice he had heard before—gentle, but insistent. But he had seen too much of that hateful cell, and he closed his eyes in tight resistance.

"Look around," said the voice, even more gently than before.

A shuddering fear seized Armstrong.

The spirit read his thoughts. "You are afraid: you dare not look at *me*. But you shall not see me. Look!"

He put his hand to his head and covered his eyes with a convulsive movement.

"Listen!" said the voice. "You have not even seen your enemy. Would you not know him?"

A cold sickness fell on Armstrong's spirit, and he shuddered. Why see the monster who had tortured him, the human fiend who could be nothing other than repulsive?

Then the voice spoke again, more gently than before.

"Listen! I am the God of Evil, but I befriend you. I pass my hand along your frame, and the pain leaves you. I touch your eyes with my fingers, and they open. Look around!"

Armstrong rose, sound and strong. The dungeon was dark, but in its recesses

he could see two cowering figures, striving to hide themselves from his eyes. One was the masked man; one was the director, the inquisitor, the author of all his misery.

"See how he hides from you,' whispered the voice. "But you shall not be denied. TURN!"

The sudden thunder of that last word echoed through the vault, and then there came a short, sharp, double flash of blinding light. The first flash showed a crouching, cowering figure in the background, with pale, set face, and cruel eyes, the second struck Armstrong full in the face and felled him to the ground.

* * * * * * *

Dazed and frightened, as after a hideous nightmare, he pulled himself together. The match he had taken up was still in his hand, and he turned back, mastering himself with a great effort, to his patient.

He lighted the big burner and turned it full on the chair. The man, roused from the lethargy of morphia, slowly opened his eyes.

Armstrong staggered back, stifling the cry of horror that rose to his lips; for in that one glance he saw, clear and unmistakable, the face of his torturer—re-incarnated, but still the same.

IV

ARMSTRONG turned aside to hide his excitement. After all, then, the vision had not been in vain; it was the complement of the first, and now all was clear. The Mystery of Human Pain! His own great book on the subject! He laughed aloud. All that thought and time and labour had been wasted, and here was the truth, shown to him in a dream—the truth that all the world should know. A strange exaltation filled his spirit.

"*I* suffered pain, and now I reap my reward—strong, happy, a healer of wounds, myself knowing no suffering. *He* inflicted pain and torture, and now he suffers for it."

The patient in the chair moved uneasily and groaned. Armstrong went on:

"A righteous Judge rewards me for what I have undergone, and scourges him for the evil he has wrought."

"THE LORD HAVE MERCY ON HIS SOUL!"

It was a deep voice that spoke, the words booming and reverberating like the notes of heavy bells. It touched a new chord in Armstrong's mind, and sent the blood throbbing and pulsing through his head. "The Lord have mercy on his soul!" Why? What mercy had *he* had for others? And with that the fury of hate returned to him and surged through his veins, till he felt himself more demon than man. Every pang, every pain, every racking agony that he had suffered in those two terrible visions, returned to him threefold, burned into his soul, branded on every limb and sinew. Curse him with the curse of the martyr, and blast him with the breath of his iniquities!

And then a cold, unnatural calm fell upon Armstrong, and his quivering hands grew steady and cunning as before.

* * * * * * *

It was all so easy! The man lay there, half conscious—with enough sensation left to feel every torture inflicted on him, but yet unable to speak or groan. It was a carefully managed anæsthetic, administered just sufficiently to glaze the eyes and paralyse the tongue, but no more. And the brain lay so near at hand!

" He pushed the curtains back and looked out."

The mad fury of revenge had left Armstrong, and he was cold, scientific and deliberate—no movement hurried, no torment left untried, and all done with the mechanical, even touch of the skilled workman. A pang for a pang, a stab for a stab, a scald for a scald: Armstrong remembered each pain he had endured, and paid it back threefold. On the subtle mechanism of the head he played as on a keyed instrument, sending hot, shooting pains, and dull, numbing clutches, to the remotest parts of the wretched frame.

All the poor worn nerves centred within his grasp, and to his eyes they were visible throughout their hidden course, coming to one common end, where he grasped them as with a handle, and turned and ground and twisted and crushed, till they stretched, strained, groaned and quivered under his racking touch. He hissed taunting words in his ears—words that he knew could not be answered; he mocked at the helpless agony. And all the while he watched the blue lips, striving to curse and moan, but bound by the hellish drug as with a gag, and the bloodshot, straining eyes, too fixed even to appeal, and the dumb agony of the whole wretched form. And a grim, silent laughter shook him.

But it could not last for ever: his hand wearied, and his head reeled. He fell to the ground in a swoon. . . .

Bells were ringing—light, airy, joyous bells, and he roused himself. The bells grew slower, fainter—died out altogether—and in their place a voice was in his ears, very soft and low. What was it saying? It was so faint, so indistinct. . . .

"On *your* soul may the Lord have mercy!"

* * * * * * *

Armstrong rose as from a dream. In the chair lay a shape, not mangled, indeed, but pale-faced, shrunken, distorted, horrible. He bent his head down and listened to the heart: there were two feeble beats, a faint flicker, and then it stopped.

There was a strange catch in the surgeon's breath. The room was hot and close; he pushed the curtains back, and looked out. It was night now—a deep blue sky, studded with myriad stars. And one star shot upwards in a blaze of silver light.

Armstrong turned away, breathing heavily. There was the body still, and there were the little instruments he had used.

The present did not stir him, gave him no thought, but the knowledge of the future was upon him, and he groaned aloud in the new-born agony of his soul. For he knew what he had done: it was his chance, and he had missed it; it was his trial, his ordeal, and he had failed. . . . And in the next life on earth his torture would be longer and harder to bear. The Lord would have no mercy on his soul.

D. L. B. S.

A VOLCANIC VALVE

THE Dean and I were sitting on the balcony of the Hotel Tramontano at Sorrento. Vesuvius was indulging in a small eruption, and we were watching the thin bright stream of lava that was flowing from the crater. Occasionally a flash of light lit up the dark cloud which crested the mountain. There was no moon that night, and the mild fireworks of the volcano, though they could hardly be called imposing, were certainly interesting.

"After all," said the Dean, "Vesuvius is a very small affair compared with some volcanoes. Think of Krakatoa, for instance. I am told that at the last eruption of Krakatoa, ten thousand people were killed by ashes, hot water, stones, and lava, that were thrown up by the mountain."

"You are mistaken, sir!" said a voice from a secluded corner of the balcony. "Thirty thousand people were killed by that eruption. I was there myself, and ought to know."

"Oh, indeed!" said the Dean. "I should really like to hear your account of it."

The owner of the voice promptly dragged his chair into our neighbourhood. He was a small, cadaverous looking man, and spoke with a strong American accent. From his appearance, I decided that he must be an American stock broking millionaire, and as the event proved, I was right.

"I shall be happy to tell you all about it," said the American. "Am I right in thinking that one of you gentlemen is a minister?"

"I am a clergyman, if that is what you mean," replied the Dean.

"Just so!" said the American. "I'll tell you the truth about that eruption, and then you'll tell me if in your opinion I was to blame for the death of those thirty thousand people. They were all heathen, sir; and I'd like you to remember that fact, for I don't suppose that killing a heathen is as serious a business as killing a white man. However, we'll come to that presently.

"I was up the Mediterranean about a dozen years ago in my yacht. She was a steamer of 840 tons, and could make fifteen knots an hour, which was considered

fast in those days. I had no passengers with me except an old friend of mine who was a sort of mining engineer. He had made a lot of money in his time, and had lost it all in speculating. But he was just as full of enterprise and spirits as he ever was. He was about as good a travelling companion as a man could have, and I wish I had him with me now.

"We were lying in this identical bay, and Vesuvius was erupting on a small scale just as she is now, when one day Malcomb, my engineer friend, comes to me and says: 'I've the biggest idea that I've struck yet, and if you'll furnish the capital we'll carry it out, and make money hand over fist.'

"'What is it?' said I. 'If it's really a good thing perhaps I'll go into it with you.'

"'You admit,' said he, 'that Vesuvius is the attraction that brings most people to Naples. They come here to see an eruption, and nine times out of ten the mountain don't erupt. Now, if you and I owned that mountain and could turn on an eruption whenever we pleased, we should have the biggest show on earth. We could make a uniform charge of a thousand dollars an eruption, and the municipality would pay it cheerfully, for they would get their money back ten times over out of the visitors that would come to Naples to see a genuine eruption. If ten thousand visitors come here every winter knowing that their chance of seeing an eruption is about one in a hundred, how many do you think would come if they could be absolutely sure of an eruption every night, except Sundays, at nine o'clock to the minute? Why, sir! Vesuvius, properly managed, would draw at least half a million people every season, and if they were taxed a dollar a head there would be half a million dollars to be shared by the municipality and the managers of the show.'

"'That's all right enough,' said I; 'but what I don't see is how you are going to manage the mountain, and make it erupt or not erupt, just as you please.'

"'I have thought it all out,' said Malcomb, 'and the thing's as easy as rolling off a log. What is it that makes a volcano erupt? It's steam, sir! steam! You look down the crater of a volcano that isn't erupting, and you'll see that the bottom is covered with a thick crust of hardened lava. That crust stays there, and keeps the mountain from erupting until she gets too big a head of steam on. When that happens the steam blows out the crust of lava, and then there is an eruption until the pressure is reduced. A volcano is nothing more or less than a big boiler without a safety valve, or any sort of an escape pipe. It's bound to burst at irregular intervals. Now, if you provide a volcano with a safety valve, so that you can regulate the pressure, you can have an eruption whenever you please, or you can prevent any eruption from taking place. All you have to do is to watch the safety valve and attend to it properly.'

"'Your reasoning may be all right,' said I, 'but I don't see how you are going to fit a safety valve to Vesuvius. You'll find it a bigger job than selling a silver mine to a British syndicate.'

"'When Vesuvius is quiet,' said Malcomb, 'that crust that I spoke of is about a hundred feet from the top of the cone. I know this because I have been reading a book written by a scientific sharp who tells all about the mountain. Now, if you drive a gallery straight into the mountain at the foot of the cone, you will strike the steam chest, so to speak, at about five or six hundred feet below the crust. You make this gallery, say, six feet in diameter, and as long as it is open the steam will rush out, and keep the mountain from exploding. That's my plan for keeping the mountain quiet when I don't want an eruption.'

"'And how are you going to manage your eruptions?' I asked.

"'That's another easy one,' said he. 'In order to make steam you require

water, don't you? Well! I calculate to have a big pumping engine that will throw a stream of water twenty-four inches in diameter into that gallery. When this water strikes the melted lava in the inside of the mountain it will be converted into steam, and as soon as the pressure gets up to the necessary point there will be an eruption. A few experiments will show just how much water will be required to produce a first-class eruption. When we know that, we will know just what time of day to begin pumping in order to have an eruption at nine o'clock p.m.'

"What Malcomb said interested me. I knew he was one of the best mining engineers in the States, and besides knowing all about the mines, he knew all there was to know about steam engines. I began to think there might be something in his scheme, and as I hadn't been doing anything except trying to amuse myself for more than six weeks, I was feeling pretty low-spirited, and knew that I needed to engage in some good speculation if I wanted to feel like myself once more.

"'I suppose,' I said, after thinking the thing over for a few minutes, 'that we could buy Vesuvius for a song'

"'We don't need to buy anything but the cone,' replied Malcomb, 'but I'll undertake to buy the whole blessed mountain for a thousand dollars. By a rough calculation it will cost about ten thousand dollars to set up the proper machinery and bore the gallery. After that is done our expenses won't be worth mentioning. Besides, I have an idea that we can utilise the heat of the mountain, and supply it to Naples in pipes. Naples could warm itself and do all its cooking with the heat that we would furnish, and you can see for yourself that there would be the biggest kind of a fortune to be got out of this single feature of my scheme.'

"Well, we talked about putting a safety valve into Vesuvius, and going into business as the 'Vesuvius Exhibition and Heat Supplying Company' for the next week, Malcomb getting more and more enthusiastic about it, and I gradually making up my mind to give the thing a trial. But I saw perfectly well that it wouldn't do to go into the thing without experimenting first, and I knew that we couldn't conduct any experiments on Vesuvius without letting the public into the secret. Either we would make a failure, and be laughed at, or we would succeed, in which case somebody would buy up Etna, and start an opposition show that would be twice as big as ours—for Vesuvius isn't to be named in the same day with Etna. Finally, I thought of a way out of the difficulty, and I proposed it to Malcomb.

"'You find,' said I, 'some big volcano, situated in a place where there is nobody to watch our proceedings, except perhaps a lot of savages, and I'll furnish the capital necessary for putting a safety valve into that volcano. If the experiment succeeds, then we'll come back to the Mediterranean and buy up every volcano, active or extinct, that we can hear of. But I won't touch the thing until we have proved by experiment that it is practicable. I like a good speculation as well as anybody, but I won't throw money away.'

"'I know the very volcano we want,' said Malcomb. 'It's called Krakatoa, and it stands all alone on an island somewhere near Java or Sumatra. If there's anybody on the island they'll be naked savages, and it won't matter what they think of our proceedings. Let's lay in a compressed air boring machine and a pumping engine, and start for Krakatoa as soon as possible.'

"I agreed to this proposal, and we lay here in the Bay of Naples about two months waiting for our machinery, which we couldn't get short of England. Malcomb was so full of his scheme that he gradually got me to believe in it almost as thoroughly as he did himself. If our experiments should turn out to be successful, and we could get the monopoly of all the volcanoes in Europe, there would be hardly any

Their head-man [illegible] kept them from being exhausted by the heat

end to the things we could do. We could furnish heat and energy to every town in Europe, and could knock the coal-mining business higher than a kite.

"I had lost a little money in coal mines myself—something like three million dollars—and I rather liked the idea of freezing out the coal market. Of course I didn't grudge the loss of the money, for a financier is bound to have his losses as well as his profits; and then, again, I knew that the British and French coal mines were not responsible for my losses in Pennsylvania mines. Still, we're only human after all, and I daresay that our ministerial friend here, if he'll allow me to call him such, knows what it is to want to get square with somebody or something if his salary isn't paid up to date.

"Well, the machinery arrived, and after a good deal of trouble on the part of our chief engineer, who didn't understand what the machinery was wanted for, and was inclined to think that I was taking a liberty in putting any sort of machinery aboard the yacht without first consulting him, we got it stowed away. When we were ready to sail, I ordered my sailing master to take the yacht to Batavia, where I expected we could get some information as to the whereabouts of Krakatoa, for it wasn't laid down on any chart, and all Malcomb or the sailing master or I knew about it was that it was a volcano, and was situated somewhere within five hundred miles of Java.

"Well, we got to Batavia in due time, and if you'll take my advice you'll never go there. It's just a Turkish bath, with fever and Dutchmen thrown in, and soap and shampooing left out. I found out the latitude and longitude of Krakatoa, and laid in thirty-eight Chinese coolies, and was thankful to get away from Batavia with my life—though, as the doctor tells me, I left the greater part of my liver behind me.

"We made Krakatoa the third day after leaving Batavia. It was a tremendous big mountain, about five or six times as high as Vesuvius, and was situated on an island that, as far as we could see, was uninhabited, though I don't say that there might not have been people living on the north side of the island, for we didn't take the trouble to circumnavigate it. There were no signs of any activity about the volcano, which Malcomb said was proof that her fires were banked, and that she was in precisely the proper condition for our experiments. We didn't waste any time in getting the machinery ashore and setting it up, but the job took the best part of a week, for the reason that everything had to be carried ashore on the coolies' heads, and we could only land when the sea was quiet.

"According to Malcomb's calculations his gallery would have to be about seven hundred feet long in order to reach the centre of the cone. You see we didn't start it at the foot of the volcano, but about half way up the cone, at a place where there was a sort of terrace that gave us room for setting up the machinery. The gallery was six feet in diameter, and the boring machine had no difficulty in cutting through the consolidated ashes and soft rock that formed the greater part of the mountain. Malcomb and I lived aboard the yacht, and the coolies lived ashore in a tent. We worked twelve hours a day, for the Chinamen hadn't heard of the eight-hour law; and their head-man, who carried a big whip, kept them from being exhausted by the heat, or brought them to without much trouble whenever they fainted, or fell down with a sunstroke, or tried to play any other game on him.

"The gallery sloped downward at an angle of about twenty-five degrees, so that when we should come to pumping water into it, the water would run down easily into the interior of the volcano. In about a month we had the gallery nearly finished, and Malcomb calculated that with two days' more labour we could break through into the interior of the cone. He never told me how he expected to

protect the coolies from the steam that would rush into the gallery the moment an opening was made into the steam chest of the mountain; but as I knew he didn't like to be questioned about details, I let him take his own way without questioning him.

"We had both gone on board the yacht for dinner, leaving the coolies at work, and were congratulating ourselves that the job was so nearly completed, when there was the noise of a tremendous explosion, followed by a rush of steam out of the mouth of the gallery. The steam hid everything from sight for a distance of, say, three hundred yards from the mouth of the gallery; but beyond that we could see the machinery and thirty-eight coolies sailing through the air at about the speed of a cannon ball. At the rate they were going Malcomb calculated that they would fetch up beyond the reach of the earth's attraction, and would keep on sailing through the universe like so many comets. I don't know whether he was right or not, but I never heard that the least particle of either machinery or coolies ever struck the earth again. We only had a glimpse of them for a second or two, and then they went out of sight, the same as a hawk does when it flies directly away from you at its best speed.

"So far as I could see, those Chinamen were bound straight for heaven, and they couldn't have been many minutes in reaching it.

"The steam continued to rush out of Malcomb's safety valve without diminishing in quantity or force. If you were to get together all the steamers in the world and set them all to blowing off steam at the same moment, and then multiply the roaring of the steam a hundred times, you'd begin to have some idea of the noise that Krakatoa made blowing off steam through Malcomb's safety valve. On board the yacht we could only talk by signs, and we finally gave that up, for the noise was so great that you couldn't even think. This lasted till one o'clock in the morning, when there came a crash that was louder than anything that was ever heard on this earth, before or since. It was a mercy that it didn't deafen every man of us for good and all. I have been told that it was heard a distance of fully a thousand miles, and I don't doubt it. To tell the truth, I have never got fairly rid of that noise from that day to this, and it is always in my ears more or less, especially when I put my head on my pillow. What had happened was that Krakatoa had burst its boiler. You may perhaps know that if you have a heavy pressure of steam on a boiler, and you let the water get too low, the most dangerous thing you can do is to blow off steam. The moment that you reduce the pressure on the surface of the water, the whole of it flashes into steam, and your boiler is blown into smithereens. Now, Krakatoa had a good head of steam on, and her water must have been pretty low, for after she had blown off for five or six hours the pressure was so far reduced that all the water remaining in her rushed into steam, and produced the biggest explosion on record. The upper half of the mountain was blown clean away, and the air was filled with stones and lava and ashes and hot water. Inside of five minutes the moon and the stars went out, and it was as black as midnight in Egypt in the time of old Pharaoh. In next to no time our deck was covered six inches deep with ashes and stones, and the sea was boiling worse than it does in the centre of a cyclone. We were in danger of being swamped through shipping a tremendous sea, as well as being buried under the weight of ashes, or sunk by a flying rock, or set on fire by red-hot stones.

"My sailing-master slipped his cable and started up the engine just as quick as he could do it, and then we steamed away as fast as we could drive her towards the north. The channel wasn't an easy one in the daylight, and the sailing-master

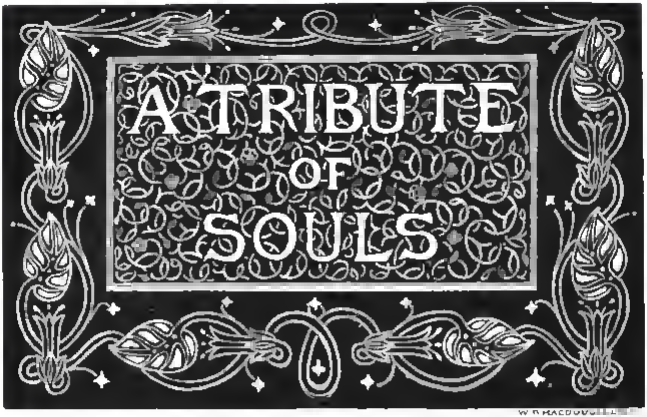
didn't even pretend that he could navigate it in the pitch darkness However, we were certain to lose the yacht and our lives if we stayed at our anchorage, and we couldn't do more than that by trying to run away. So we just took our chances, knowing at the time that they were mighty slim, and hoping that if we did wreck the yacht, it wouldn't be on a coast inhabited by cannibals There never was such luck as we had that night, for we never once touched the bottom, though, as we afterwards knew, old islands were sinking and new ones were being thrown up all around us. After the eruption was over, ships that passed that way found dry land in places where there had been a thousand fathoms of water, and sailed directly over places where there had been dry land and mountains It was nearly ten o'clock the next day before we ran clear of the ashes and came into open daylight. Then we found out where we were, and put the yacht on a course for Singapore.

"That's the way the great eruption of Krakatoa was brought about; and what I want to know is whether Malcomb and I are responsible for the thirty thousand heathens that are said to have been killed by it. Of course we never meant to hurt a living soul; and of course a heathen isn't anything like as valuable as a white man, and the penalty for killing him, if there is one, would be comparatively light. Still the thought that I had a hand in killing all those heathen disturbs me at times,—especially at night, when I lie awake, as I do the greater part of every night I want to ask our ministerial friend here his opinion of the matter, and what he thinks I had better do to straighten the thing out—that is, if it can be straightened out"

Before the Dean could reply, a man, whom the American called "Doctor," and who was evidently his travelling companion, approached him, and after a whispered conversation drew him away, and we saw him no more I have never been quite sure whether the story that he told us concerning the eruption of Krakatoa was true, or was the invention either of a lunatic or a practical joker. I meant to find the Doctor in the morning, and ask him if his friend was quite right in his mind, but, as it happened, I was obliged to leave Sorrento without seeing him

For my own part I am inclined to believe the story, but the reader is at perfect liberty to regard it as the dream of a madman.

W. L. ALDEN



PRELUDE

[The matter of Carlounie, the village of Perthshire in Scotland, is become notorious in the world. The name of its late owner, his remarkable transformation, his fortunate career, his married life, the brooding darkness that fell latterly upon his mind, the flaming deed that he consummated, its appalling outcome, and the finding of him by Mr. Mackenzie, the minister of the parish of Carlounie, sunk in a pool of the burn that runs through a "den" close to his house,—all these things are fresh in the minds of many men. It has been supposed that he had discovered a common intrigue between his wife, Kate—formerly a hospital nurse—and his tenant, Hugh Fraser, of Piccadilly, London. It has been universally thought that this discovery led to the last action of his life. The following pages, found among his papers, seem to put a very different complexion on the affair, although they suggest a medieval legend rather than a history of modern days. It may be added that careful inquiries have been made among the inhabitants of Carlounie, and that no man, woman, or child has been discovered who ever saw, or heard of, the grey traveller mentioned in Alistair Ralston's narrative.]

I.

THE STRANGER BY THE BURN.

CAN a fever change a man's whole nature, giving him powers that he never had before? Can he go into it impotent, starved, naked, emerge from it potent, satisfied, clothed with possibilities that are wonders, that are miracles to him? It must be so. It is so. And yet—I must go back to that sad autumn day when I walked beside the burn. Can I write down my moods, my feelings of that day and of the following days? And, if I can, does that power of pinning the butterfly of my soul down upon the board—does that power, too, bud, blossom from a soil mysteriously fertilised by illness? Formerly I could as easily have flown in the air to the summit of cloud-capped Schiehallion as have set on paper

even the smallest fragment of my mind. Now—well, let me see, let me still further know my new, my marvellous self.

Yes, that first day! It was autumn, but only early autumn. The leaves were changing colour upon the birch trees, upon the rowans. At dawn mists stood round to shield the toilet of the rising sun. At evening they thronged together like a pale troop of shadowy mutes to assist at his departure to the under world. It was a misty season, through which the bracken upon the hill-sides of my Carlounie glowed furtively in tints of brown and of orange. And my mind, my whole being, seemed to move in mists. I was just twenty-two, an orphan, and master of my estate of Carlounie. And some idiots envied me then, as many begin to envy me now. I even remember one ghastly old man who clapped me on the shoulder and, with the addition of an unnecessary oath, swore that I was "a lucky youngster." I, with my thin, *chétif* body, my burning, weakly, starved, and yet ambitious, soul—lucky! I remember that I broke into a harsh laugh, and longed to kill the babbling beast.

And it was the next day, in the afternoon, that I took that book—my bible—and went forth alone to the long den in which the Unie burn hides and cries its presence. Yes, I took Goethe's *Faust*, and my own complaining spirit, and went out into the mist with my misty, clouded mind. My cousin Gavin wanted me to go out shooting. He laughed and rallied me upon my ill luck on the previous day, when I had gone out and been the joke of my own keepers because I missed every bird. And I turned and railed at him, and told him to leave me to myself. And, as I went, I heard him muttering, "That wretched little fellow! to think that he should be Ralston of Carlounie!" Now he sings another tune.

With *Faust* in my hand, and hatred in my heart, I went out into the delicately chilly air, down the winding ways of the garden, through the creaking iron gateway. I emerged on to the wilder land, irregular grass-covered ground, strewn with grey granite boulders, among which coarse wiry ferns grew sturdily. The black-faced sheep whisked their broad tails at me as I passed, then stooped their ever greedy mouths to their damp and eternal meal again. I heard the thin and distant cry of a whaup, poised somewhere up in the mist. The hills, clothed in the death-like glory of the bracken, loomed around me, like some phantom, tricked-out procession passing through desolate places. And then I heard the voice of the burn, that voice which is even now for ever in my ears. To me that day it was the voice of one alive. And it is the voice of one alive to me now. I descended the sloping hill, with my lounging, weak-kneed gait, at which the creatures who called me master had so often looked contemptuously askance. (I was often tired at that time.) I descended, I say, until I reached the edge of the tree-fringed den, and the burn was noisy in my ears. I could see it now leaping here and there out of its hiding-place—ivory foam among the dripping larches and the larches with their silver stems, ivory foam among the deep brown and flaming orange of the bracken, and in that foam a voice calling, calling me to come down into its hiding-place presided over by the mists, to come down into its hiding-place away from men, away from the living creatures whom I hated because I envied them, because they were stronger than I, because they could do what I could not do, say what I could not say. Gavin, Dr Wedderburn, my tenants, the smallest farm boy, the grooms, the little leaping peasants—I hated, I hated them all. And then I obeyed the voice of the ivory foam, and I went down into the hiding-place of the burn.

It ran through strange and secret places, where the soft mists hung in wet wreaths. I seemed to be in another world when I was in its lair. On the sharply

"I sat and listened to its murmur."

rising banks stood the sentinel trees like shadows, some of them with tortured and tormented shapes. As I turned and looked straight up the hill of the burn's descending course, the mountain from which it came closed in the prospect inexorably. A soft gloom hemmed us in—me and the burn which talked to me.

We two were out of the world which I hated and longed to have at my feet. Yes, we were in another world, full of murmuring and of restful unrest. And now that I was right down at the water side, the ivory face of my friend, the ivory lips that spoke to me, the ivory heart that beat against my heart—so sick and so weary—were varied and were changed. As thoughts streak a mind, the clear amber of the pools among the rocks streaked the continuous foam that marked the incessant leaps taken by the water towards the valley. The silence of those pools was brilliant, like the pauses for contemplation in a great career of action. And their silence spoke to me, mingling mysteriously with the voice of the foam. The course of the burn is broken up, and attended by rocks that have been modelled by the action of the running water into a hundred shapes. Some are dressed in mosses yellow and green, like velvet to the touch, and all covered with drops of moisture. Some are gaunt and naked and deplorable, with sharp edges and dry faces. The burn avoids some with a cunning and almost coquettish grace, dashes brutally against others as if impelled by an internal violence of emotion. Others, again, it caresses quite gently, and would be glad to linger by if Nature would allow the dalliance. And this army of rocks helps to give to the burn its charm of infinite variety, and to fill its voice with a whole gamut of expression. For the differing shape of each boulder against which it rushes in its long career gives to it a different note. It flickers across the small and round stone with the purling cry of a child. From the stone curved inwards and with a hollow bosom it gains a crooning liquid melody. The pointed and narrow colony of rocks which break it into an intricate network of small water-threads toss it chattering frivolously towards the dark pool under the birches, where the trout play like sinister shadows, and the insects dance in the sombre pomp of autumn. And when it gains a great slab that serves it for a spring board, from which it takes a mighty leap, its voice is loud and defiant, and shrieks with a banshee of triumph—in which, too, there is surely an undercurrent of wailing woe. Oh, the burn has many voices among the rocks, under the ferns and the birch trees, in the brooding darkness of the mists and shadows, between the steep walls of the green banks that hem it in: many voices, which can sing, when they choose, one song, again and again and—monotonously—again!

So—now on this sad autumn day—I was with the burn in its hiding place, cool, damp, fretful. Carlowrie sank from my sight. My garden, the wilder land beyond, the moors on which yesterday my incompetence as a shot had roused the contempt of my cousin and of my hirelings—all were lost to view. I was away from all men in this narrow, tree-shrouded cleft of a world. I sat down on a rock, and, stretching out my legs, rested my heels on another rock. Beneath my legs the clear brown water glided swiftly. I sat and listened to its murmur. And, just then, it did not occur to me that water can utter words like men. The murmur was suggestive, but definitely inarticulate. I had come down here to be away and to think. The murmur of my mind spoke to the murmur of the burn. And, as ever in those days, it lamented and cursed and bitterly complained.

Why, why was I pursued by a malady of incompetence that clung to both mind and body? (So ran my thoughts.) Why was I bruised and beaten by Providence? Why had I been given a soul that could not express itself in the frame of a coward, a weakling, a thin, nervous, dwarfish, almost a deformed creature? If my soul had corresponded exactly to my body, then all might have been well enough. I should have been more complete, although less in some way than I now was. For such a soul would have accepted cowardice, weakness, inferiority to others as suitable to it, as a right fate. Such a soul would never

have known the meaning of the word rebellion, would never have been able to understand its own cancer of disease, to diagnose the symptoms of its villainous and creeping malady. It would never have aspired like a flame, and longed in vain to burn clearly and grandly or to flicker out for ever. Rather would such a soul have guttered on like some cheap and ill-smelling candle, shedding shadows rather than any light, ignorant of its own obscurity, regardless of the possibilities that teem like waking children in the wondrous womb of life, oblivious of the contempt of the souls around it, heedless of ambition, of the trumpet call of success, of the lust to be something, to do something, of the magic, of the stinging magic of achievement. With such a soul in my hateful, pinched, meagre, pallid body, I thought, sitting thus by the burn, I might have been content—an utterly low, and perhaps an utterly satisfied product of the fiend Creation.

But my soul was not of this kind, and so I was the most bitterly miserable of men. God—or the devil—had made me ill-shaped, physically despicable, with the malign sort of countenance that so often accompanies and illustrates a bad, poor body. My limbs, without being actually twisted, were shrunken and incompetent—they would not obey my desires as do the limbs of other men. My legs would not grip a horse. When I rode I was a laughing-stock. My arms had no swiftness, no agility, no delicate and subtle certainty. When I tried to box or to fence, I was one whirling, jigging incapacity. I had feeble sight, and objects presented themselves to my vision so strangely that I could not shoot straight. I, Alistair Ralston, of Carlounie! When I walked my limbs moved heavily and awkwardly. I had no grace, no lightness, no ordinary, quite usual competence of bodily power. And this was bitter, yet as nothing to the Marah that lay beyond. For my body was in a way complete. It was a wretch. But when you came to the mind you had the real tragedy. In many decrepit flesh temples there dwells a commanding spirit, as a great God might dwell—of bizarre choice—in a ruinous and decaying lodge in a wilderness. And such a spirit rules, disposes, presides, develops, has its own full and superb existence, triumphing not merely over, but actually through, the contemptible body in which it resides, so that men even are led to worship the very ugliness and poverty of this body, to adore it for its power to retain such a mighty spirit within it. Such a spirit was not mine. Had it been, I might have been happy by the burn that autumn day. Had it been, I might never . . . but I am anticipating. And I must not anticipate. I must sit with the brown water rushing beneath the arch of my limbs, and recall the horror of my musing.

In a manner, then, my soul matched my body. It was feeble and incompetent too. My brain was dull and clouded, my intellect was sluggish and inert. But—and this was the terror for me—within the rank nest of my soul, my spirit, lay coiled two vipers that never ceased from biting me with their poisoned fangs—self-consciousness and ambition. I knew myself, and I longed to be other than I was. I watched my own incompetence as one who watches from a tower. I divined how others regarded me—precisely. The blatant and comfortable egoism of a dwarf mind in a dwarf body was never for one moment mine. I was that terrible anomaly—an utterly incomplete and incompetent thing, that adored, with a curious wildness of passion, completeness, competence. Nor had I a soul that could ever be satisfied with a one-sided perfection. My desires were Gargantuan. When I was with my cousin Gavin, a fine all-round sportsman, I longed with fury to be a good shot, to throw a fly as he did, to have a perfect seat on a horse. I felt that I would give up years of life to beat him once in any of his pursuits. When I was with Dr. Wedderburn, my desires, equally intense, were utterly different. He represented in my neighbourhood Intellect—with a capital I. A man

of about fifty, minister of the parish of Carloumie, he was astonishingly adroit as a controversialist, astonishingly eloquent as a divine His voice was full of music. His eyes were full of light and of the most superb self-confidence. He rested upon his intellect as a man may rest upon a rock. The power of his personality was calm and immense. I felt it vehemently. I shook and trembled under it I hated and loathed the man for it—because I wanted and could never possess it. So, too, I hated my cousin Gavin for his possessions his long and sure sighted eyes, great and strong arms, broad chest, lithe legs, bright agility. My body could do nothing. My soul could do nothing—except one great thing. It could fully observe and comprehend its own impotence. It could fully, and desperately, envy and pine to be what it could never be. Could never be—do I say? Wait! Remember, that is only what I thought then, as I sat upon the rock, and, with haggard young eyes, watched the clear brown water slipping furtively past between my knees

My disease seemed to culminate that day, I remember. I was a sick invalid alone in the mist Something—it might have been vitriol—was eating into me, eating, eating its way to my very heart, to the core of me. Oh, to be stunted and desire to be straight and tall, to be dwarf and wish to be giant, to be stupid and long to be a genius, to be ugly and yearn to be in face as one of the shining gods, to have no power over men and to pine to fascinate, hold, dominate a world of men—this, indeed, is to be in hell! I was in hell that autumn day. I clenched my thin, weak hands together; I clenched my teeth, from which the pale lips were drawn back in a grin; and I realised all the spectral crowd of my shortcomings They stood before me like demons of the Brocken—yes, yes, of the Brocken!—and I cursed God with the sound of the burn ringing and chattering in my ears. And I devoted Gavin, Dr. Wedderburn, every man highly placed, every lowest peasant, who could do even one of all the things I could not do, to damnation. The paroxysm that took hold of me was like a fit, a convulsion I came out of it white and feeble. And suddenly the voice of the burn seemed to come from a long way off. I put out my hand, and took up from the rock on which I had laid it, *Faust*. And, scarcely knowing what I did, I began mechanically to read—to the dim rapture of the burn

"*Scene III. The Study Faust (entering with the poodle)*" I began to read, do I say, mechanically? Yes, it is true, but soon, very soon, the spell of Goethe was laid upon me. I was in the lofty-arched, narrow, Gothic chamber, with that living symbol of the weariness, broken ambition, learned despair of all the ages. I was engrossed. I heard the poodle snarling by the stove I heard the spirits whispering in the corridor. Vapour rose—or was it indeed the mist from the mountains among the birch trees?—and out of the vapour came Mephistopheles in the garb of a travelling scholar. And then—and then the great bargain was struck. I heard—yes, I did, I actually and most distinctly heard a voice, Faust's, say, "*Let us the sensual deeps explore. . . . Plunge we in Time's tumultuous dance, In the rush and roll of circumstance,*" a pause, then the student's grave and astonished tones came to me: *Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum* The cloak was spread, and on the burning air Faust was wafted to his new life—nay, not to his new life merely, but to Life itself He vanished, with his guide, in a coloured, flower like mist. I dropped my hand holding the book down upon the cold rock by which the cold water splashed It felt burning hot to my touch My head fell upon my breast, and I had my dreams—dreams of the life of Faust and of its glories, gained by this bargain that he made And then—yes, then it was!—the voice of the burn, as from leagues away in the bosom of this very

mist, began to sing like a fairy voice, or a voice in dreams and in visions of the night, "*If it was so then, it might be so now*" At first I scarcely heeded it, for I was enwrapt. But the song grew louder, more insistent. It was travelling to me from a far country. I heard it coming. "*If it was so then, it might be so now —If it was so then, it might be so now.*" How near it was at last, how loud in my ears! And yet always there was something vague, visionary, about it, something of the mist, I think. At length I heard it with the attention that is of earth. I came to myself, out of the narrow, Gothic chamber in which the genius of Goethe had prisoned me. And I stared into the mist, which was gathering thicker as the night began to fall. It seemed flower-like and full of strange and mysterious colour. I trembled. I got up. Still I heard the voice of the burn singing that monotonous legend, on and on and on. Slowly I turned. I climbed the bank of the dell. The sheep scattered lethargically at my approach. I passed through the creaking iron gate into the garden. Carlounie was before me. There was something altered, something triumphant, about its aspect. The voice of the burn faded in a long diminuendo. Yet, even as I gained the door of my house, and, before entering it, paused in an attentive attitude, I heard the water chanting faintly from the den, "*If it was so then, it might be so now.*" As I came into the hall, in which Gavin and Dr. Wedderburn stood together talking earnestly, I remember that I shivered. Yet my cheeks were glowing.

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From that moment not a day passed without my visiting the burn. It summoned me. Always it sang those words persistently. The sound of the water can be very faintly heard from the windows of Carlounie. Each day, at dawn, I pushed open the lattice of my bedroom and hearkened to hear if the song had changed. Each night, at moonrise, or in the darkness through which the soft and small rain fell quietly, I leaned over the sill and listened. Sometimes the wind was loud among the mountains; sometimes the silence was intense and awful. But in storm or in stillness the burn sang on, ever and ever the same words. At moments I fancied that the voice was as the voice of a man demented, repeating with mirthless frenzy through all his years one hollow sentence. At moments I deemed it the cry of a fair woman, a siren, a Lorelei among my rocks in my valley. Then again I said, "It is a spirit voice, a voice from the inner chamber of my own heart." And—why I know not—at that last fantasy I shuddered. Even in the midnight, from my window ledge I leaned while the world slept, and I heard the mystic message of the burn.

My visits to its bed were not unobserved.

One morning my cousin Gavin said to me roughly, "Why the devil are you always stealing off to that ditch"—so he called the den that was the home of my voice—"when you ought to be practising to conquer your infernal deficiencies? Why, the children of your own keepers laugh at you! Try to shoot straight, man, and be a real man instead of dreaming and idling."

I stared at him, and answered, "You don't understand—everything."

Once Dr. Wedderburn, who had been my tutor, said to me, more kindly, "Alistair, action is better for you than thought. Leave the burn alone. You go there to brood. Try to work; for work is the best man-maker, after all."

And to him I said, "Yes, I know!" and flew with a strong wing in the face of his advice. For the voice of the burn was more to me than the voice of Gavin, or of Wedderburn. And the mind of the burn meant more to me than the mind of any man. And so the autumn died slowly, with a lingering decadence, and shrouded perpetually in mist. I often felt ill, even then. My lady was

"It was vague, but less vague than a shadow

dressed in weakness. Perhaps already the fever was upon me. I wish I could know. Was it crawling in my veins? Was it nestling about my heart and in my brain? Could it be that? .

Certainly during this period life seemed alien to me, and I moved as one apart in a remote world, full of the music of the burn, and full, too, of vague clouds. That is so. Looking back, I know it. Still, I cannot be sure what is the truth. In the very late autumn I paid my last visit to the burn before my illness seized me. The cold of early winter was in the air and a great stillness. It was afternoon when I left the house, walking slowly with my awkward gait. My face, I know, was white and drawn, and I felt that my lips were twitching. I did not carry my volume of Goethe in my hand, but, in its place, held an old book on transcendental magic. The voice of the burn—yes, that alone—had led me to study this book.

So now I took it down to the burn. Why? Had I the foolish fancy of introducing my live thing of the den to this strange writing on the black art? Who knows? Perhaps the fever in my veins put the book into my hand. I shivered in the damp cold as I descended the steep ground that lay about the water, which that day seemed to roar in my ears the sentence I had heard so many days and nights. And this time, as I hearkened, my heart and my brain echoed the last words, "*It might be so now.*" Gaining the edge of the burn, then in heavy spate, I watched for a while the passage of the foam from rock to rock. I peered into the pools, clouded with flood water from the hills and with whirling or sinking dead leaves. And all my meagre body seemed pulsing with those everlasting words. "Why not now?" I murmured to myself—with a sort of silent sneer, too, at my own absurdity. I remember I glanced furtively around as I spoke. Grey emptiness, grey loneliness, dripping bare trees, through whose branches the mist curled silently, cold rocks, the cold flood of the swollen burn,—such was the blank prospect that met my eyes.

There was no man near me; there was no one to look at me. I was remote, hidden in a secret place, and the early twilight was already beginning to fall. No one could see me. I opened my old and ragged book, or rather, let it fall open at a certain page. Upon it I looked, for the hundredth time, and read that he who would evoke the devil must choose a solitary and condemned spot. The burn was solitary. The burn was condemned surely by the despair and by the endless incapacities of the wretched being who owned it. I had taken off my shoes and placed them upon a rock. My feet were bare. My head was covered. I now furtively proceeded to gather together a small heap of sticks and leaves, and to these I set fire, after several attempts. As the flames at last crept up, the mist gathered more closely round me and my fire, as if striving to warm itself at the blaze. The voice of the burn mingled with the uneasy crackle of the twigs, and a murmur of its words seemed to emanate also from the flames—two elements uniting to imitate the utterance of man to my brain, already surely tormented with fever. And now, with my eyes upon my book, I proceeded to trace with the sharp point of a stick in some sandy soil between two rocks a rough Goetic circle of black evocations and pacts. From time to time I paused in my work and glanced uneasily about me, but I saw only the mists and the waters.

At length my task was finished and the time had arrived for the supreme effort of my insane and childish folly. Standing at Ainasarae in the circle, I said aloud the formula of Evocation of the Grand Grimoire, ending with the words, "Jehosua, Evam, Zariatnatmik, come, come, come!"

My voice died away in the twilight, and I stood among the grey rocks waiting, mad creature that I surely was! But only the rippling voice of the burn answered my adjuration. Then I repeated the words in a louder tone, adding menaces and imprecations to my formula. And all the time the fire I had kindled sprang up into the mist, and the twilight of the heavy autumn fell slowly round me. Again I paused, and again my madness received no satisfaction, no response. But it seemed to me that I heard the browsing sheep on the summit of the right bank of the den scatter as if at the approach of some one. Yet there was no stir of footsteps. It must have been my fancy, or the animals were merely changing their feeding ground in a troop, as they sometimes will, for no assignable cause. And now I made one last effort, urged by the voice of the burn, which sang so loudly the words which had mingled with my dream of Faust. I cried aloud the supreme appellation, making an effort that brought out the sweat on my forehead, and set the pulses leaping in my thin and shivering body—

"Chavajoth! chavajoth! chavajoth! I command thee by the Key of Solomon and the great name Semhamphoras"

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A little way up the course of the burn the dead wood cracked and shuffled under the pressure of descending feet. Again I heard a scattering of the sheep upon the hillside. My hair stirred on my head under my cap, and the noise of the falling water was intolerably loud to me. I wanted to hear plainly, to hear what was coming down to me in the mist. The brushwood sang nearer. In the heavy and damp air there was the small, sharp report of a branch snapped from a tree. I heard it drop among the ferns close to me. And then in the mist and in the twilight I saw a slim figure standing motionless. It was vague, but less vague than a shadow. It seemed to be a man, or a youth, clad in a grey suit that could scarcely be differentiated from the mist. The flames of my fire, bent by a light breeze that had sprung up, stretched themselves towards it as if to salute it. And now I could not hear any movement of the sheep. Evidently they had gone to a distance. At first, seized with a strange feeling of extreme, almost unutterable, fear, I neither moved nor spoke. Then, making a strong effort to regain control of my ordinary faculties, I cried out in the twilight—

"What is that? What is it?"

"Only a stranger who has missed his way on the mountain, and wants to go on to Wester Denoon."

The voice that came to me from the figure beyond the fire sounded, I remember, quite young, like the voice of a boy. It was clear and level, and, perhaps, a little formal. So that was all. A tourist—that was all!

"Can you direct me on the way?" the voice said.

I gave the required direction slowly, for I was still confused, nervous, exhausted with my insane practices in the den. But the youth—as I supposed he was—did not move away at once.

"What are you doing by this fire?" he said. *"I heard your voice calling by the torrent among the trees when I was a very long way off."*

Strangely, I did not resent the question. Still more strangely, I was impelled to give him the true answer to it.

"Raising the devil!" he said. "And did he come to you?"

"No, of course not. You must think me mad."

"And why do you call him?"

Suddenly a desire to confide in this stranger, whose face I could not see now, whose shadowy form I should in all probability never see again, came upon me. My usual nervousness deserted me. I let loose my heart in a turbulent crowd of words. I explained my impotence of body and of mind to this grey traveller in the twilight. I dwelt upon my misery. I repeated the cry of the burn, and related my insane dream of imitating Faust, of making my poor pact with Lucifer, with the sphinx of mediæval terrors. When I ceased the boy's voice answered,—

"They say that in these modern days Satan has grown exigent. It is not enough to dedicate to him your own soul. But you must also pay a tribute of souls to the Cæsar of Hell."

"A tribute of souls?"

"Yes. You must bring, they say, the mystic number—three souls to Satan."

Suddenly I laughed.

"I could never do that," I said. "I have no power to seduce man or woman. I cannot win souls to heaven or to hell."

"But if you received new powers, such as you desire—would you use them to win souls—three souls, to Lucifer?"

"Yes," I said, with passionate earnestness. "I swear to you that I would."

Suddenly the boy's voice laughed.

"*Quomodo cecidisti*, Lucifer!" he said. "When thou canst not contrive to capture souls for thyself! But," he added, as if addressing himself once more to me, after this bizarre ejaculation, "your words have, perhaps, sealed the bond. Who knows? Words that come from the very heart are often deeds. For, as we can never go back from things that we have done, it may be that sometimes we can never go back from things that we have said."

On the words he moved, and passed so swiftly by me into the twilight down the glen, that I never saw his face. I turned instinctively to look after him, and —this was strange—it seemed that the wind at that very moment must have turned with me, blowing from, instead of towards, the mountain. This certainly was so, for the tongues of flame from my fire bent backward on a sudden, and leaned after the grey traveller, whose steps died swiftly away among the rocks and on the shuffling dead wood and leaves of the birches and the oaks.

And then—there came a singing in my ears, a beating of many drums in my brain. I drooped and sank down by the fire in the mist. My fever came upon me like a giant, and presently Gavin and Dr. Wedderburn, searching in the night, found me in a delirium and bore me back to Carlounie.

II.

THE SOUL OF DOCTOR WEDDERBURN.

To emerge from a great illness is sometimes dreadful, sometimes divine. To one man the return from the gates of death is a progress of despair. He feels that he cannot face the wild contrasts of the surprising world again, that his courage has been broken upon the wheel, that energy is desolation, and sleep true beauty. To another this return is a marvellous and superb experience. It is like the vivid reawakening of youth in one who is old, a rapture of the past committing an act of brigandage upon the weariness of the present, a glorious substitution of Eden for the outer courts where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. It will be supposed that I found myself in the first category, a terror-stricken and rebellious mortal, when the fever gave me up to the world again, for the world had always been cruel to me, because I was afraid of it and was a puny thing in it. Yet this was not so. My convalescence was like a beautiful dream of rest underneath which riot stirred. A simile will explain best exactly what I mean. Let me liken the calm of my convalescence to the calm of earth on the edge of spring. What a riot of form, of scent, of colour, of movement is preparing beneath that enigmatic and apparently profound repose! In the simile you have my exact state. And I alone felt that within this womb of inaction the child, action, lay hid, developing silently but inexorably day by day. This knowledge was my strange secret. It came upon me one night when I lay awake in the faint twilight shed by a carefully shaded lamp over my bed. Rain drummed gently against the windows. There was no other sound. By the fire, in a great armchair, the trained nurse, Kate Walters, was sitting with a book—"Jane Eyre" it was—upon her knees. I had been sleeping, and now awoke, thirsty. I put out my hand to get at a tumbler of lemonade that stood on a table by my pillow. And suddenly a thought, a curious thought, was with me. My hand had grasped the tumbler and lifted it from the table, but instead of bringing my hand to my mouth I kept my arm rigidly extended, the tumbler poised on my palm as upon the palm of a juggler.

"How long my arm is!" that was my thought. "And how strong!" Formerly

it had been short, weak, awkward. Now surely, after my illness, my arms would naturally be nerveless, useless things. The odd fact was that now, for the first time in my life, I felt joy in a physical act. An absurd and puny act, you will say! I daresay. What of that? With it came a sudden stirring of triumph. I lay there on my back and kept my arm extended for full five minutes by the watch that ticked by my bed-head. And with each second that passed joy blossomed more fully within my heart. I drank the lemonade as one who drinks a glad toast. Yet I was puzzled. "Is this—can this be a remnant of delirium?" I asked myself. And beneath the clothes drawn up to my chin I fingered my arm above the elbow. It was the limb of a big, strong man. Surprise—supreme astonishment forced an exclamation from my lips. Kate got up softly and came towards me. But I feigned to be asleep, and she returned to the fire. Yet, peering under my lowered eyelids, I noticed an expression of amazement upon her young and pretty face. I knew afterwards that it was the sound of my voice—my new voice—that drew it there. After that night my convalescence was more than a joy to me: it was a rapture touched by, and mingled with, something that was almost awe. Is not the Earth awe struck when she considers that Spring and Summer nestle silently in her bosom? With each day the secret which I kept grew more mysterious, more profound. Soon I knew it could be a secret no longer. The fever—it must be that!—had wrought magic within my body, driving out weakness, impotence, lassitude, developing my physical powers to an extent that was nothing less than astounding. Lying there in my bed, I felt the dwarf expand into the giant. Think of it! Did ever living man know such an experience before? A bodily spring came about within me. And I was already twenty-two years old before the fever took me. My limbs grew large and strong. The muscles of my chest and back were tensely strung, and knit as firmly as the muscles of an athlete. I lay still, it is true, and felt much of the peculiar vagueness that follows fever, but I was conscious of a supine, latent energy never known before. I was conscious that when I rose, and went out into the world again, it would be as a man, capable of holding his own against other strong, straight men. That was a wonder. But it was succeeded by a greater marvel yet.

One afternoon, while I was still in bed, Dr. Wedderburn came to see me and to sit with me. He had been away on a holiday, and consequently had not visited me before, except once when I had been delirious. The Doctor was a short, spare man, with a sharply-cut brick-red face, lively and daring dark eyes, and straight hair already on the road to grey. His self-possession bordered on self-satisfaction; and despite his good heart, and the real and anxious sanctity of his life, he could seldom entirely banish from his manner the contempt he felt for those less intellectual, less swift-minded than himself. Often had I experienced the stinging lash of his sarcasm. Often had I withered beneath one of his keen glances, that dismissed me from an argument as a profound sage might kick an urchin from the study into the street. Often had I hated him with a sick hatred, and ground my teeth because my mind was so clouded and so helpless, while his was so lucent and so adroit. So now, when I heard his tap on the door, his deep voice asking to come in, a rage of self-contempt seized me, as in the days before my illness. The Doctor entered with an elaborate softness, and walked, flat-footed, to my bed, pursing his large lips gently, as men do when filled with cautious thoughts. I could see he desired to moderate his habitual voice and manner; but, arrived close to me, he suddenly cried aloud, with a singularly full-throated amazement

"Boy—boy, what's come to you?" he called. Then, abruptly putting his finger to his lips, he sank down in a chair, his bright eyes fixed upon me

"Boy boy! what a come to you?"

"It's a miracle," he said slowly.

"What is?" I asked, with an invalid's pettishness

"The voice too—the voice"

I grew angry easily, as men do when they are sick.

"Why do you say that? Of course I've been bad—of course I'm changed"

"Changed! Look at yourself—and praise God, Alistair."

He had caught up a hand mirror that lay on the dressing table, and now put it into my hand. For the first time since the fever I saw my face. It was as it had been, and yet it was utterly different. For now it was beautiful. The pinched features seemed to have been smoothed out; the mouth had become firm and masterful; the haggard eyes were alight as if torches burned behind them. My expression, too, was powerful, collected, alert. I scarcely recognised myself. But I pretended to see no change.

"Well—what is it?" I asked, dropping the glass.

The Doctor was confused by my calm.

"Your look of health startled me," he answered, sitting down by the bed and examining me keenly.

All at once I was seized by a strange desire to get up an argument with this

man, by whom I had so often been crushed in conversation. I leaned on my elbow in the bed, and fixing my eyes on him I said,—

"And why should I praise God?"

The Doctor seemed in amazement at my tone.

"Because you are a Christian and have been brought back from death," he replied, but with none of his usual half sarcastic self-confidence.

"You think God did that?"

"Alistair, do you dare to blaspheme the Almighty?"

I felt at that moment like a cat playing with a mouse. My lips, I know, curved in a smile of mockery; and yet I will swear, yes, even to my own heart, that all I said that day I said in pure mischief, with no evil intent. It seemed that I, Alistair Ralston, the dolt, the ignoramus, longed to try mental conclusions with this brilliant and opinionated divine. He hade me praise God. In reply I praised—the devil. And I forced him to hear me. Absolutely I broke into a flood of words, and he sat silent. I compared the good and evil in the scheme of the world, balancing them in the scales the one against the other. I took up the stock weapon of atheism—the deadly nature, the deadly outcome of free will. I used it with skill. The names of Strauss, Comte, Schopenhauer, Renan, a dozen others, sprang from my lips. The dreary doctrine of the illimitable triumph of sin, of the appalling mistake of the permission granted it to step into the scheme of Creation, in order that its presence might create a *raison d'être* for the power of personal action one way or the other in mankind—such matters as these I treated with a vehement eloquence and command of words that laid a spell upon the Doctor. Going very far, I dared to exclaim that since God had allowed his own scheme to get out of gear, the only hope of man lay in the direction of the opposing force, in frank and ardent Satanism.

When at length I ceased from speaking, I expected Dr. Wedderburn to rise up in his wrath and to annihilate me. But he sat still in his chair with a queer and, as I thought, puzzled expression upon his face. At last he said, as if to himself—

"The miracle of Balaam, verily the miracle of Balaam!"

The ass had indeed spoken as never ass spoke before. I waited a moment, then I said,—"Well, why don't you rebuke me, or why don't you try to controvert me?"

Again he looked upon me, very uneasily I thought, and with something that was almost fear in his keen eyes.

"Ah!" he said, "I have praised the Lord many a morning and evening for His gift of words to me. It seems others bestow that gift too. Alistair"—and here his voice became deeply solemn—"where have you been visiting when you lay there mad to all seeming? In what dark place have you been to gather destruction for men? With whom have you been talking?"

Suddenly, I know not why, I thought of the grey stranger; and, with a laugh, I cried,—"The grey traveller taught me all I have said to you."

"The grey traveller! Who may he be?"

But I lay back upon the pillows and refused to answer, and very soon the Doctor went, still bending uneasy, nervous eyes upon me.

In those eyes I read the change that had stolen over my intellect, as in the hand mirror I had read the change that had stolen over my face. This strange fever had caused both body and soul to blossom. I trembled with an exquisite joy. Had Fate relented to me at last? Was it possible that I was to know the joys of the heroes? I longed for, yet feared, my full recovery. In it alone should I discover how sincere was my transformation. Dr. Wedderburn did not come to me again. The days passed, my convalescence strengthened, watched over by

the pretty nurse, Kate Walters—a fresh, pure, pious, innocent, beautiful soul, tender, temperate and pitiful for all sorrow and evil. At length I was well. At length I knew, to some extent, my new, my marvellous self. For I had indeed been folded up in my fever like a vesture, and, like a vesture, changed. I had grown taller, expanded, put forth mighty muscles as a tree puts forth leaves. My cheeks and my eyes glowed with the radiance of strong health. I went out with my cousin Gavin, whose estate marched with mine, and I shot so well that he was filled with admiration, and forthwith conceived a sort of foolish worship for me—having a sportsman's soul, but no real mind. For the first time in my life I felt absolutely at home on a horse. An unwonted skill came to my hands, and I actually schooled Gavin's horses over some fences he had had set up in a grass park at the Mains of Cossens. The keepers, who had once secretly jeered at me, were now at my very feet. Their children looked upon me as a young god. I rejoiced in my strength as a giant. But I asked myself then, as I ask myself now—what does it mean? The days of miracles are over. Yet is this not a miracle? And in a miracle is there not a gleam of terror, as there is a gleam of stormy yellow in the fated opal?

But here I leave my condition of body alone, and pass on to the episode of Dr. Wedderburn, partially related in the newspapers of the day, and marvelled at, I believe, by all who ever knew or even set eyes upon him.

The Doctor, as I have said, did not come again to see me, but I felt an overmastering desire to set forth and visit him. This was surprising, as hitherto I had rather avoided and hated him. Now something drew me to the manse. At first I resisted my inclination, but a chance word led me to yield to it impulsively. Since my illness I had not once attended church. Moved by a violent distaste for the religious service, that was novel in me, I had frankly avowed my intention of keeping away. But as I did not go to the kirk I missed seeing Dr. Wedderburn. And I wanted to see him. One day, leaning by chance against a stone dyke in the Glen of Ogilvy, smoking a pipe and enjoying the soft air of spring as it blew over the rolling moorland, I heard two ploughmen exchange a fragment of gossip that made excitement start up quick within me.

One said,—"The Doctor's failin'. Man, he was fairly havern' last Sabbath, on and on, wi'out logic or argeyment, or sense."

The other answered,—"Aye, he's greatly changed. He's no' the man he was. It fairly beats me. I canna mak' it oot. Ye've heard that——" and here he lowered his voice and I could not catch his words.

I turned away from the wall and, walking swiftly, set out for the manse with a busy mind. The afternoon was already late, and when I gained a view of the manse, a cold grey house standing a little apart in a grove of weary-looking sycamores, one or two lights smiled on me from the small windows that stared upon the narrow and muddy road. The minister's study was on the right of the hall door, and, as I pulled the bell, I observed the shadow of his head to dance upon the drawn white blind, a thought fantastically, or with a palsied motion, I fancied. The yellow-headed maidservant admitted me with a shrunken grin, that suggested wild humour stifled by achieved respect; and I was soon in the minister's study. Then I saw that Dr. Wedderburn was moving up and down the room, and that his head was going this way and that as he communed in a loud voice with himself. My entrance checked him as soon as he observed me—which was not instantly, as at first his back was set towards me and the mood-swept maid. When he turned about, his discomposure was evident. His gaze was troubled, and his manner, as he shook hands with me, had in it something of the tremulous, and was backward in geniality. We sat down on either side of the fire, the tea-

"God forgive you, Alistair, for what you're doing!"

service, and the hot cakes, loved of the Doctor, between us. At first we talked warily of such things as my recovery, the weather, the condition of affairs in the parish, and so forth. I noticed that though the Doctor's eyes often rested, with an almost glaring expression of scrutiny or of surprise, upon me, he made no remark on the change of my appearance. Nor did I on the change of his, which was startling, and suggested I know not what of sorrow and of the attempt to kill it with evil weapons. The healthy brick-red of his complexion was now become scarlet and full of heat. His mouth worked loosely while he talked. The flesh of his cheeks was puffed and wrinkled. His eyes had the clouded and yet fierce aspect of the drunkard. But, absurdly enough, what most struck me in him was his abstinence from an accustomed act. He drank his tea, but he ate no hot cakes. This was a departure from an established, if trifling, custom of many years' standing, and worked on my imaginative conception of what the Doctor now was more than would, at the first blush, appear likely, or even possible. Instead of, as of old, feeling myself on the worm level in his presence, I was filled with a sense of pity, as I looked upon him and wondered what subtle process of mental or physical development or retrogression had wrought this dreary change. Presently,

while I wondered, he put his cup down with an awkward and errant hand that set it swaying and clattering in the tray, and said abruptly,—

"And what have you come for, Alistair, eh? what have you come for? To go on with what you've begun? Well, well, lad, I'm ready for you, I'm ready now."

His voice was full of timorous irritation, his manner of pitiable distress

"I've thought it out, I've thought it all out," he continued; "and I can combat you, I can combat you, Alistair, wherever you've got your fever-mind from, and your fever-tongue."

I knew what he meant, and suddenly I knew, too, why I had wanted so eagerly to come to the manse. My instinct of pity and of sympathy died softly away. My new instinct of cruel rapture in the ruthless exercise of my—shall I call them fever-powers, then?—woke, dawned to sunrise. And Dr. Wedderburn and I fell forthwith into an animated theological discussion. He was desperately nervous, desperately ill at ease. His argumentative struggles were those of a drowning man, positively convinced—note this—that he would drown, that no human or divine aid could save him. There was, too, a strong hint of personal anger in his manner, which was strictly undignified. He fought a losing battle with bludgeons, and had an obvious contempt for the bludgeons while in the act of using them in defence or in attack. And, at last, with a sort of sharp cry, he threw up his hands, and exclaimed in a voice I hardly knew as his,—

"God forgive you, Alistair, for what you're doing! God forgive you, murderer, murderer!"

This dolorous exclamation ran through me like cold water, and chilled all the warmth of my intellectual excitement.

"Murderer!" I repeated, inexpressively.

Dr. Wedderburn sat in his chair, trembling, and looking upon me with despairing and menacing eyes, the eyes of a man who curses, but cannot fight, his enemy.

"Of a soul—of a soul," he said. "The poisoned dagger—doubt, the poisoned dagger—you've plunged it into me, boy." Then, raising his voice harshly, he exclaimed, "Curse you! curse you!"

I was thunderstruck. I declare it here, for it is true. I had defamed, and deliberately, the Doctor's dearest idols. I had driven my lance into his convictions. I had blasphemed what he worshipped, and had denied all he affirmed. But that I had made so terrific an impression upon his mind, his soul, this astounded me. Yet what else could his passionate denunciation mean? Had I, a boy, unused to controversy, unskilled in dialectics, overthrown with my hasty words the faith of this strong and fervent man? The thought thrilled one side of my dual nature with triumph, pierced the other with grim horror. My emotions were divided and complex. As I sat silent, my face dogged yet ashamed, the Doctor got up from his chair trembling like one with the palsy.

"Away from me—away!" he cried, in a hoarse voice, and pointing at the door. "I'll have no more talk with the devil—no more, no more!"

I had not a word. I got up and went, bending a steady, fascinated look upon this old mentor of mine who now proclaimed himself my victim. Arrived in the garden, I found a thin moon riding above the sycamores, and soft airs of spring playing round the Doctor's habitation. Strangely, I had no mind to be gone from it immediately. I crossed the garden bit and paced up and down the lane that skirted it, keeping an eye upon the lighted window of the study. So I went back and forth for full an hour, I suppose. Then I heard a sound in the spring night. The Doctor's hall door banged; and, peering through the privet hedge that protected his meagre domain, I perceived him come out into the air

bareheaded. He took his way to the small path that ran by the hedge parallel to the lane, coming close to the place by which I crouched, spying upon his privacy. And there he paced, bemoaning aloud the ill fate that had crept upon him. I heard all the awful complaining of this soul in distress, besieged by doubts, deserted by the faith and hope of a lifetime. It was villainous to be his audience; yet I could not go. Sometimes the poor man prayed with a desolate voice, calling upon God for a sign, imploring against temptation. Sometimes—and this was terrible—he blasphemed, he imprecated. And then again he prayed—to the devil, as do the Satanists. I heard him weeping in his garden in the night, alone under the sycamores. It was a new agony of the garden, and it wrung my heart. Yet I watched it till the spectral moon waned, and the trees were black as sins against the faded sky.

About this time, as I have said, his parishioners began to mark the outward change of Dr. Wedderburn that signified the inward change in him. The talking ploughmen had their fellows. All who sat under the Doctor were conscious of a difference, at first vague, in his eloquent discourses—of a diminuendo in the full fervour of his delivery and manner. Gossip flowed about him, and presently there were whisperings of change in his bodily habits. He had been seen by night wandering about his garden in very unholy condition, he who had so often rebuked excess. Children, passing his gate in the dark of evening, had endured with terror his tipsy shoutings. A maidservant left him, and spread doleful reports of his conduct through the village. By degrees, rumours of our minister's shortcomings stole, like snakes, into the local papers, carefully shrouded by the wrappings that protect scandalmongers against libel actions. The congregation beneath the Doctor's pulpit dwindled. Women looked at him askance. Men were surly to him, or—and that was less kind—jocular. I alone followed with fascination the paling to dusk of a bright and useful career. I alone partially understood the hell this poor creature carried within him. For I often heard his dreary night thoughts, and assisted, unperceived of him, at the vigils that he kept. The lamp within his study burned till dawn while he wrestled, but in vain, with the disease of his soul, the malady of his tortured heart.

One night in summer time, towards midnight, I bent my steps furtively to the manse. It was very dark, and the weather was dumb and agitating. No leaf danced, no grass quivered. Breathless, dead, seemed the woods and fields, the ocean of moorland, the assemblage of the mountains. I heard no step upon the lonely road but my own, and life seemed to have left the world until I came upon the manse. Then I saw the light in the Doctor's window, and, drawing near, observed that the blind was up and the lattice thrust open among the climbing dog-roses. Craftily I stole up the narrow garden path and, keeping to the side of the window, looked into the room.

Dr. Wedderburn lounged within at the table facing me. A pen was in his shaking hand. A shuffle of manuscript paper was before him, and a Bible in which he thrust his fingers, as if to keep texts already looked out. Beyond the Bible was a bottle three-quarters full of whiskey and a glass. His muttering lips, and dull, yet shining eyes, betokened his condition. I saw before me a drunkard writing a sermon. The vision was sufficiently bizarre. A tragedy of infinite pathos mingled with a comedy of hideous, yet undeniable, humour in the live picture. I neither wept nor did I laugh. I only watched, shrouded by the inarticulate night. The Doctor took a pull at the bottle, then swept the leaves of the Bible . . .

"Let me die the death of the righteous," he murmured thickly. "That's it—that's—that's——" He wrote on the paper before him with a wandering pen, then pushed the sheet from him. It fell on the floor by the window.

"And let my last end be like his,—Ah—ah!"

He drank again, and again wrote with fury. How old and how wicked he looked, yet how sad! He crouched down over the table, and the pen broke in his hand. A dull exclamation burst from him. Taking up the bottle, he poured by accident some of the whiskey over the open Bible.

"A baptism! a baptism!" he ejaculated, bursting into laughter. "Now—now—let's see—let's see"

Again he violently turned the sodden leaves and shook his head. He could not read the words, and that angered him. He drank again and again, till the bottle was empty, then staggered out of the room. I heard his frantic footsteps echoing in the uncarpeted passage. Quickly I leaned in at the window and caught up the sheet of paper that had fallen to the floor. I held it up to the light. Only one sentence writhed up and down over it, repeated a dozen times: "There is no God!" While I read I heard the Doctor returning, and I shrank back into the night. He came stumbling in, another whiskey bottle full in his hand. Falling down in the chair he applied his lips to it and drank—on and on. He was killing himself there and then. I knew it. I wanted to leap into the room, to stop him, yet I only watched him. Why? . . . I want to know why. . .

At last he fell forward across the Bible with a choking noise. His limbs struggled. His arms shot out wildly, the table broke under him—there was a crash of glass. The lamp was extinguished. Darkness crowded the little room—and silence.

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The papers recorded the shocking death of a minister. They did not record this.

As I stole home that night, alone in my knowledge of the Doctor's appalling end, I heard going before me light and tripping footsteps—those, apparently, of some youth, not above three yards or so from me. What wanderer thus preceded me? I asked myself, with a certain tingling of the nerves, shaken, perhaps, by what I had just seen. I paused. The steps also paused; the person was stopping too. I resumed my way. Again I heard the tripping footfalls. Their sound greatly disquieted me, yet I hurried, intending to overtake the wayfarer. Still the steps hastened along the highway, and always just before me. I ran, yet did not come up with any person. I called—"Stop! Stop!" There was no reply. Again I waited. This man—or boy (the steps seemed young)—waited also. I started forward once more. So did he. Then a fury of fear ran over me, urging me at all hazards to see in whose train I travelled. We were now close to Carlounie. We entered the "policies." Yes, this person turned from the public road through my gates into the drive, and the footfalls reached the very house. I stopped. I dared not approach quite close to the door. With trembling fingers I fumbled in my pocket, drew out my matchbox, and, in the airless night, struck a match. The tiny flame burned steadily. I stretched my hand out, approaching it, as I supposed, to the face of the stranger.

But I saw nothing. Only, on a sudden, I heard some one hasten from me across the sweep of gravel in the direction of the burn. And then—after an interval—I heard the rush of startled sheep through the night.

Just so had they scattered on the day I spoke with the grey traveller by the burnside.

ROBERT HICHENS.
FREDERIC HAMILTON.

(To be concluded next month.)

III

THE SOUL OF KATE WALTERS.

IT is more than two years since I wrote down any incident of my life. Two years ago, I seemed to myself a stranger. To-day an intimacy has grown up between myself and that observant, detached something within me—that little extra spirit which looks on at me, and yet is, somehow, me. I am at home with my own power. I am accustomed to my strength of personality. From my fever I rose like some giant. Long ago my world recognised the obedience it owed me. Long ago, by many signs, in many ways, it taught me the paramount quality of the emanation from my soul that is called my influence. Yet sometimes, even now, I seem to stare at myself aghast, to turn cold when I am alone with—myself. I am seized with terrible fancies. I think of the voice of the burn. I think of that childish autumn ceremony upon its bank among the mists and the flying leaves. I think of the grey youth who spoke with me in the twilight, and my soul is full of questions. I muse upon the Wandering Jew, upon Faust, upon Van der Decken, upon the monstrous figures that are legends, yet sometimes realities, to men. And then—and this is ghastly—I say to myself, can it be that I, too, shall become a legend? Can it be that my name will be whispered by the pale lips of good men long after I am dead? For is there not a whirl of white faces attending my progress as the whirl of dead leaves attends the autumn? Do I not hear a faint symphony of despairing cries like a dreadful music about my life? Is not my power upon men malign? Boys with their hopes shattered, men with their faiths broken, women with their love turned to gall—do they not crowd about my chariot wheels? Or is it my vain fancy that they do? Here and there from the sea of these beings one rises like a drowned creature whom the ocean will not

hide, stark, stiff, corpse-like. Dr. Wedderburn was the first. Kate Walters is the second—Kate Walters.

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When my convalescence was well advanced she left Carlounie and went back to Edinburgh. Some months afterwards I heard casually that she was working in a hospital there. But a year and a half went by before I saw this girl again. Her fresh, pure, ministering face had nearly faded from my memory. Yet she had attended intimately upon my marvellous transformation from the death of weakness to the life of strength. She had lifted me in her girl's arms when I was nothing. Yes, I had been in her arms then. How strange, how close, are the commonest relations between the invalid and his nurse! When I chanced to meet Kate again, I had no thought of this. I had forgotten. I came to Edinburgh on some business connected with a mine discovered on my estate, which seemed likely to make a great fortune for me, and is already on the way to accomplishing this first duty of a mine. My business done, I stayed on at my hotel in Princes Street, amusing myself. For I had a multitude of friends in Edinburgh. One of these friends was a medical student attached to the hospital there, and he chanced to invite me to go with him through the wards one day. In one of the wards I encountered Kate Walters, fresh, clear, calm as in the old Carlounie days of my illness. She did not know me till I recalled myself to her recollection. Then she looked into my face with the frankest astonishment. My superb physique amazed her, although she had attended upon its beginnings. I asked after her life in the interval since our last meeting; and she told me, with a delightful blush, that her period of nursing was nearly concluded, as she was engaged to be married to one, Hugh Fraser—a handsome, rich, and—strange thing this!—most steadfast youth, who lived in England, in the south, and who loved her tenderly. I congratulated her, and was on the point of moving away down the ward with my friend when my eyes were caught again by Kate's blushing cheeks, and eyes alight with the fiery shames and joys of love.

How beautiful is the human face when the torches of the heart are kindled thus! How beautiful! I paused, and before I went invited Kate to tea, one afternoon at my hotel. She accepted the invitation. Why not? In our meeting the old chain of sympathy between patient and nurse seemed forged anew. We felt that we were indeed friends. As we left the ward my student chum chaffed me,—I let his words go by heedlessly. I was not in love with Kate, but I was half in love with her love for Hugh Fraser. It had such pretty features. She came to tea and told me all about him, and when she talked of him she was so fascinating that I was loath to let her go. It was a sweet evening, and as Kate had not to be back at the hospital early, I suggested that we should go for a stroll on Calton Hill, and talk a little more about Hugh Fraser. The bribe tempted her. I saw that. And she agreed, after a moment's hesitation.

There is certainly an influence that lives only out of doors, and can never enter a house, or exercise itself within four walls. There is a wandering spirit in the air of evening, a soul that walks with gathering shadows, speaks in the distant hum of a city, and gazes through its twinkling lights. *There is a grey traveller who journeys in the twilight.* (What am I saying? To-day, as I write, I am full of fancies.) I felt that so soon as Kate and I were away from the hotel, out under the sky and amid the mysteries of Edinburgh, we were changed. In a flash our intimacy advanced, the sympathy already existing between us deepened. Leaving the streets, we mounted the flight of steps that leads to the hill, and

"'Hugh Fraser should be here, not I'"

joined a few couples who were walking, almost like gods on some Olympus, above the world. They were all obviously lovers. I pointed this fact out to Kate, saying, "Hugh Fraser should be here, not I."

She smiled, but scarcely, I thought, with much regret. For the moment it seemed that a confidant satisfied her. And this pleased me. I drew her arm within mine.

"We must not alarm the lovers," I said. "We must appear to be as they are, or we shall carry a fiery sword into their Eden."

"You seem to understand us very well," she answered, with a smile. And she left her arm in mine

The mention of "us" chilled me. It seemed to set me outside a magic circle within which she, Hugh Fraser, these people sauntering near us like amorous ghosts in the dimness, moved. I pressed her arm ever so gently.

"Tell me how lovers feel at such a time as this," I whispered, looking into her eyes.

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From Calton Hill at night one sees a heaving ocean of yellow lights, gleaming like phosphorescence on ebon waves. Towards Arthur's Seat, towards the Castle, they rise. By Holyrood, by the Old Town, they fall. That night I could fancy that this sea of light spoke to me, murmured in my ear, urging me to prosecute my will ruthlessly, stirring a strange and perhaps evanescent romance in my heart. I know that when I parted from Kate that night I bent and kissed her. I know that she looked up at me startled, even terrified, yet found no voice to rebuke me. I know that I did not leave Edinburgh, as I had originally intended, upon the morrow. And I know this best of all—that I had no ill intent in staying. I was caught in a net of impulse despite my own desire. I was held fast. There are—I believe it unalterably now—influences in life that are the very Tsars of the Empires of men's souls. They must be obeyed. Possibly—is it so, I wonder?—they only mount upon their thrones when they are urgently invoked by men who, as it were, say, "Come and rule over us!" But once that invocation has been made, once it has been responded to, there is never again free will for him who has rashly called upon the power he does not understand, and bowed before the tyrant whose face he has not seen. I tremble now, as I write, I tremble as does the bond-slave. Yet I neither speak with, nor hear, nor have sight of, my master Unless indeed . . . but I will not give way to any madness of the brain. No, no, I do not hear, I do not see, although I am conscious of, my Tsar, whose unemancipated serf I am

I need not tell all the story of my soul's impression that was stamped upon the soul of Kate Walters. Perhaps it is old. Certainly it is sad I stamped deceit upon the nature which had not known it, knowledge of evil where only purity had been, satiety upon temperance. And, worst of all, I expelled from this girl's heart love for a good man who loved her, and planted, in its stead, passion for a—must I say a bad, or may I not cry, a driven man? And all this time Hugh Fraser knew nothing of his sorrow, growing up swiftly to meet him like a giant. Even now, while I write these words, he knows nothing of it As I had carelessly taken possession of the mind, the very nature, of Dr Wedderburn, so now I took possession of the very nature of Kate Walters. My immense strength, my abounding physical glory drew her—who had known me a puny invalid—irresistibly. I won the Doctor by my mind, this girl, in the main, I think, by my body. And when at length I tired of her slightly, the woman, the gentle woman, sprang up a tigress I had said, one night, that since I was obliged to go to London we must part for a while I had added that it was well Hugh Fraser lived in complete ignorance of his betrayal.

"Why?" Kate suddenly cried out.

"Because—because it is best so. He and you—some day . . . "

I paused She understood my meaning. Instantly the tigress had sprung upon me The scene that followed was eloquent. I learned what lives and moves in the very depths of a nature stirred by the inexhaustible greed of passion, twisted by passion's fulfilment, the ardent touched by the inert But upon that hurricane

has followed an immense and very strange calm. Kate is almost cold to me, though very sweet. She has acquiesced in my departure for town. She has come to one mind with me on the subject of Hugh Fraser. More, she has even written a letter to him asking him to come to her, pressing forward their marriage; and I am to be the bearer of it to him. This is only a woman's whim. She insists that I must see once the man who is to be her husband.

So, after all, the tragedy of Dr. Wedderburn is not to be repeated. I—I shall not hear, stealing along the steep and windy streets of Edinburgh, any—any strange footsteps.

* * * * * * *

What is the awful fate that pursues me? A year ago I left Edinburgh, carrying with me the letter which I understood to contain the request of Kate Walters to her lover, Hugh Fraser, to hasten on their marriage. As the train roared southwards I congratulated myself on my clever management of a woman. I had, it is true, stepped in between Kate and the calm happiness she had been anticipating when I first met her in the hospital ward. But now I had withdrawn, and, I told myself, in time. All would be well. This girl would marry the boy who loved her. She would deceive him. He would never know that the girl he married was not the girl he originally loved. He would never perceive that a human being had intervened between her and purity, truth, honour. In this letter,—I touched it with my fingers, congratulating myself,—Hugh Fraser would read the summons to the future he desired, the future with Kate Walters. His soul would rush to meet hers, and surely—after a little while—hers would cease to hold back. She would really once more be as she had been. I forgot that no human soul can ever retreat from knowledge to ignorance.

Hugh Fraser's rooms in London were in Piccadilly. Directly I arrived in town, I wrote him a note saying that I was from Edinburgh with a message from Kate Walters for him. I explained that she had nursed me through a severe illness, and hoped I might have the pleasure of making his acquaintance. In reply I received a most friendly note begging me to call at an hour on the evening of the following day.

That evening I drove in a hansom from the Cecil Hotel to Piccadilly, taking Kate's note with me. I was conscious of a certain excitement, and also of a certain moral exaltation. Ridiculously enough, I felt as if I were about to perform a sort of fine, almost paternal act, blessing these children with genuine, as opposed to stage emotion. Yes, I glowed with a consciousness of personal merit. How incredible human beings are! Arrived at Hugh Fraser's rooms, I was at once shown in. How vividly I remember that first interview of ours, the exact condition of the room, Hugh's attitude of lively anticipation, the precise way in which he held his cigarette, the grim, short bark of the fox terrier that sprang up from a sofa when I came in. Hugh was almost twenty-four years old, very tall, slim, with intense, large, dark eyes—full of shining cheerfulness just then—very short, black hair, and fine, straight features. His expression was boyish, so were his movements. As soon as he saw me he sprang forward and gave me an enthusiastic welcome—for the sake of Kate, I knew. He led me to the fire and made me sit down. I at once handed him my credentials, Kate's letter. His face flushed with pleasure, and his fingers twitched with the desire to tear it open, but he refrained politely and began to talk—about her, I confess. I understood in three minutes how deeply he was in love with her. I told him all about her that might please him, and hinted at the contents of the letter.

"What!" he exclaimed joyously, "she wants to hasten on our marriage at

"'You are a good chap to bring me such a letter,' he said."

last. And she's kept me off, but you know what girls are' She couldn't leave the hospital immediately; she swore it 'There were a thousand reasons for delay. But now—by Jove'"

His eyes were suddenly radiant, and he clutched hold of my hand like a schoolboy.

"You are a good chap to bring me such a letter," he cried

"Read it," I said, again filled with moral self-satisfaction, vain, paltry egoist that I was.

"No, no—presently'

But I insisted, and at length he complied, enchanted to yield to my importunity. He opened the letter, and, as he broke the seal, his face was like morning. Never shall I forget the change that grew in it as he read. When he had finished, his face was like starless night. He looked old, haggard, black, shrunken. I watched

him with a sensation that something had gone wrong with my sight. Surely radiance was really before me, and my tricked vision saw it as despair. Raising his blank eyes from the letter, Hugh stared towards me and opened his lips. But no sound came from them. He frowned, as if in fury at his own dumbness. Then at last, with a sharp shake of his head sideways, he said in a low and dry voice,—

"You know what is in this letter, you say?"

"I—I thought so," I answered, growing cold and filled with anxiety.

"Well, read it, will you?"

I took the paper from his hand and read,—

"DEAR HUGH,

"Make the man who brings you this letter marry me. If you don't I will kill myself. For I am ruined.

"KATE."

I looked up at Hugh Fraser over the letter which my hand still mechanically held near my eyes. I wonder how long the silence through which we stared lasted?

* * * * * * *

A month later I was married to Kate Walters!

IV

THE SOUL OF HUGH FRASER.

IT may seem strange that my influence upon the soul of Hugh Fraser should follow upon such a situation as I have just described. But everything connected with my life since the day when I met the grey boy by the burn has been utterly strange, utterly abnormal. My treachery, one would have thought, must have led Fraser to hate me. I had wrecked his happiness. I had done him the deepest injury one man can do to another. And at first he hated me. When he had wrung from me a promise to marry Kate he left me, and I did not see him again until after the wedding. But then, it seemed, he could not keep away from her. For he forgave us the wrong we had done him, and after a while wrote a friendly letter, in which he suggested that we should all forget the past.

"Why should I not see you sometimes?" he concluded. "I only wish you both good. There is no longer any evil in my heart."

Poor boy! It was to be, I suppose. The Tsar of the empire of my soul sent forth his edict, and one winter day carriage wheels ground harshly upon the gravel sweep, and Hugh Fraser was my guest at Carlounie. I welcomed him upon the very spot where those light footsteps paused that black night of Dr. Wedderburn's dreary end. And the faint sound of the burn mingled with our voices in greeting and reply.

The boy was changed. He had aged, grown grave, heavier in movement, fiercer in observation, less ready in speech. But his manner was friendly even to me, and it was plain to see that Kate still had his heart. They met quietly enough, but a flush ran from his cheek to hers as they touched hands. Their voices quivered when they spoke a commonplace of pleasure at the encounter. So the wheels of fate began slowly to turn on this winter's day.

I must tell you that my fortunes had greatly changed before Hugh Fraser came to Carlounie. I had grown rich. My investments, my speculations had prospered almost miraculously. The mine I have spoken of was proving a gold mine to me. All worldly things went well with me—all worldly things, yes.

Now, I believe that all mighty circumstances are born tiny, like children, at some given moment. As a rule they usually seem so insignificant, so puny at the birth, that we take no heed of the fact that they have come into being, and that, in process of time, they will grow to might, perhaps to horrible majesty. Only when we trace events backwards do we know the exact moment when their first faint wail broke upon our mental hearing. Generally this is so. But I affirm that I felt, at the very time of its first coming, the presence of the shadow, the tiny shadow, of the events which I am about to describe. I even said to myself, "This is a birthday."

Among many improvements on my estate I had built a new manse, in which of course our new minister lived. The old habitation of Dr. Wedderburn stood empty and deserted among its sycamores. One winter's day, Hugh Fraser, Kate, and I, in our walk passed along the lane by the now ragged privet hedge, through which I had so often observed the Doctor's agonies. It was a black and white day of frost, which crawled along the dark trees and outlined twig and branch. The air was misty, and distant objects assumed a mysterious importance. Slight sounds, too, suggested infinite activities to the mind.

As we neared the manse Hugh Fraser said to me—"Who lives in that old house?"

"Nobody," I replied.

Hugh glanced at me very doubtfully.

"Nobody," I reiterated.

"Really?" he rejoined. "But the garden?"

"Is deserted."

"Hardly," he exclaimed, pointing with his hand. "Look!"

"Yes," said Kate, as if in agreement. And she grew duskily pale.

I looked over the privet hedge, seeing only the rank and frost-bitten grass, the wild bushes, and narrow, mossy paths. Then I stared at my two companions in silence. Their eyes appeared to follow the onward movement of some object invisible to me.

"The old man makes himself at home," Hugh said. "He has gone into the summer-house now."

"Yes," Kate said again. There was fear in her eyes.

I felt suddenly that the air was very chill.

"That house is unoccupied," I repeated shortly.

We all walked on in silence. But, through our silence, it certainly seemed to me that there came a sound of some one lamenting in the garden.

A day or two later Fraser said to me,—"Why is that old house shut up?"

"Who would occupy it?" I said. "Of course, if I could get a tenant—"

"I'll take it," he rejoined quickly. "You can let me the shooting over Rissie and Ballindarg with it, can't you?"

"But——" I began. And then I stopped. I had an instinct to keep the old manse empty, but I fought it, merely because it struck me as unreasonable. How seldom are our instincts unreasonable! God, how seldom!

"I've been looking out for a shooting box," Hugh said. "That house would suit me admirably."

"All right," I answered. "I shall be very glad to have you for a tenant."

So it was arranged. When Kate heard of the arrangement I observed her to go very pale. But she made no objection. Hugh Fraser rented the house, furnished it, engaged servants, a gardener, enlarged the stables, and took up his abode there. Dr. Wedderburn's old study was now his den. When I looked in at the window

"I looked over the privet hedge, seeing only the rank grass"

through which I had seen the Doctor die, I saw Fraser smoking, or playing with his setters. I don't know why, but the sight turned me sick.

My relations with Kate, of which I have said nothing, were rather cold and distant. My passion, such as it was, had died before marriage. Hers seemed to languish afterwards. I believe that she had really loved me, but that the shame of being with me after I had wedded her actually against my will struck this sentiment to the dust. When one feeling that has been very strong dies, its place is generally filled by another. Sometimes I fancied that this was so with Kate, that the bitterness of shattered self-respect gradually transformed her nature, that a cruel frost bound the tendernesses, the warm vagaries of what had been a sweet woman's heart. But, to tell the truth, I did not trouble much about the matter. My affairs were prospering so greatly, my health was so abounding, I had so much

beside the mere egotism of brilliant physical strength to occupy me, that I was heedless, reckless—at first. Yet I had moments of a dull alarm connected with the dweller at the manse.

If Hugh Fraser changed as he read that fateful letter in London, he changed far more after he came to live at the manse. And it seemed to me that there were times when—how shall I put it?—when he bore a curious, and, to me, almost intolerable likeness to—some one who was dead. A certain old man's manner came upon him at moments. His body, in sitting or standing, assumed to my eyes elderly and damnable attitudes. Once, when I glanced in at the study window before entering the manse, I perceived him lounging over a table facing me, a pen in his hand and paper before him; and the spectacle threw all my senses into a violent and most distressing disorder. Instead of going into the house, as I had intended, I struck sharply upon the glass of the window.

Fraser looked up quickly.

"What—what are you writing?" I cried out.

He got up, came to the window and opened it.

"Eh? What's the row, man?" he said. "Why don't you come in?"

I repeated my question with an anxiety I strove to mask.

"Writing? Only a letter to town," he said, looking at me in wonder.

"Not a sermon?" I blurted forth.

"A sermon! Good heavens, no! Why should I write a sermon?"

"Oh," I replied, forcing an uneasy laugh, "you—you live in a manse. Dr Wedderburn used to write his sermons in that room."

That evening I remember that I said to Kate,—"Don't you think Hugh is getting to look very old at times?"

"I haven't observed it," she replied coldly.

Another curious thing. Very soon after he took up his abode in the manse, Fraser became markedly averse to religion. He informed us, with some excitement, that he had changed his views, and seemed much inclined to carry on an atheistical propaganda among the devout people of the neighbourhood. He declared that much evil had been wrought by Faith in Carlounie, and appeared to deem it as his special duty to preach some sort of a crusade against the accepted Christianity of the parish. I began to combat his views, and once sought the reason of his ardour and self-election to the post of teacher. His answer struck me exceedingly. He said,—

"Why should I be the one to clear away these senseless beliefs in phantasms, you say? Why, because I suppose they were woven by my predecessor in the manse. Didn't the minister live and die there? Do you know, Ralston, sometimes, as I sit in that study at night, I have a feeling that instead of turning to what is called repentance when he died the minister turned the other way, recanted in his last hour the faith he had professed all through his life, and expired before he could give words to his new mind and heart? And then I feel as if his influence, left behind him in that room, fell upon me and imposed on me this mission."

And as he spoke he suddenly plucked at his face with an old habitual action of Dr. Wedderburn's when excited. I scarcely restrained a cry, and with difficulty forced myself to go out slowly from his presence. Nevertheless I felt strongly impelled to fight against the atheism of this boy, I who had formerly sown the seeds of destruction in the soul of Dr. Wedderburn. But it was as if my own act of the past rose and conquered me in the present. I declare solemnly it was so. Some emanation from the poor dead creature's soul clung round that cursed place of his doom, and, seizing upon the soul of Fraser, spread tyranny from its throne. And whom did it take first as its victim, think you? Kate, my wife!

Let our individual beliefs be what they may, one thing we must all—when we think—acknowledge, that the pulse which beats eternally in the heart of life is reparation.

Kate, as I have said, was originally finely pure, and finely dowered with the blessings of faith in a divine Providence, trust in the eventual redemption of the world, hope that sin, sorrow and sighing would indeed flee away and all mankind find eternal and unutterable peace. In my worst moments I had never tried to destroy this beauty of her soul; and, in her fall, now repaired, she had never abandoned her religion. It was, I know, a haunting memory of the last moments of the Doctor that held me back from ever attacking the faith of another. For myself I did not think much of my future beyond death. Life filled my horizon then.

But now, after a short absence in England, during which I left Kate at Carlounie, I returned to find her infected with Fraser's pestilent notions. She declined to go to the kirk, declaring that it was better to act up to her real convictions than to set what is called a good example to her dependants. She and Fraser gloried openly in their new-found damnation. I say damnation, for this was actually how the matter struck me when I began carefully to consider it. Men often see only what irreligion really is and means when they find it existing in a woman. I was appalled at this deadly fire flaring up in the heart of Kate, and I set myself, at first feebly, at length determinedly, to quench it and stamp it out.

But I fought against my own former self. I fought against the influence of the spectre that surely haunted the manse, and that spectre rose originally from the very bosom of the burn at my summons. Am I mad to think so? No, no. Oh, the eternal horror that may spring from one wild and lawless action, from the recital of one diabolic litany! This was surely the strangest, subtlest reparation that ever beat in the inexorable heart of life. Hugh Fraser was enveloped by the influence, still retained mysteriously in his abode, of the soul that was gone to its account. Through him it seized upon Kate, and thus the mystic number was made up—three souls were bound and linked together. (I hear, as I write, the voice of the grey traveller by the burn in the twilight.) And in the first soul I had planted the seed of death, and so in the second and in the third. Now, thrusting as it were backward through Kate and Hugh Fraser, I fought with a dead man, long ago, perhaps, wrapped in pain unknown. But, as the influence of Dr. Wedderburn had formerly—before the fever—dominated my influence, so now from the tomb it dominated my influence. Indeed, this man whom I had destroyed had a drear revenge upon me. There had been an interregnum when the Doctor wavered from Christianity to atheism. But that had ceased to be. He died undoubtedly a blatant unbeliever. Hence surely his deadly power now. He returned, as it were, to slay me. The spectre at the manse defied me.

Slowly I grew to feel, to know, all this. It did not come upon me in a moment. For sometimes my worldly affairs still occupied me. My glory of health and of strength still delighted me. I was as Faust—I was as Faust in his monstrous and damnable youth. But there came a time when the spectre at the manse touched me with the hand of Hugh Fraser. And then I rose up to battle with it, trembling at the thought of the grey boy's words, at the thought of the Cæsar of Hell whose tribute was three human souls.

Kate and I were taking tea one evening with Fraser. We sat around the hearth, by which was placed the table with the tea service and the hot cakes. Fraser began, as was his habit now, to discuss religious subjects and to rail against the professors of faith. Kate listened to him eagerly—a filthy fire, so I thought,

gleaming in her great eyes I was silent, watching And presently it seemed to me that Fraser's gestures in talking grew like the dead gestures of the Doctor. He threw his hands abroad with the fingers divided in a manner of Wedderburn's. He struck his knees sharply, and simultaneously, with both his palms to emphasise his remarks—a frequent habit of the dead man's. So vehement was the similarity that I began presently to feel that the Doctor himself declaimed in the firelight, and I was seized with a desire to combat effectively his wicked, but forcible, arguments. I broke in, then, upon Fraser's tirade, and cried the cause of religion He turned upon me, dealt with my pleas, scattered my contentions—growing, I fancied, very old, and with the rumbling voice of age,—thrust at me with the lances of sarcasm, sore belaboured me into silence and mute fury And all the time Kate sat by, and I seemed to see her soul, with fluttering outstretched wings, sinking down to hell, as a hawk drops out of sight into a dark cleft of the mountains. And then, in the last resort, Fraser struck his hand down on mine to clinch his defeat of me. And I, looking upon that poor Kate, cried out—

"God forgive you, Fraser, for what you're doing—murderer! murderer!"

No sooner had my cry died away than I knew I had borrowed the very words of Wedderburn to me. A cold, like ice, came upon me This reversal of the past in the present was too ironic. I heard the Doctor chuckling drearily in Hades I suddenly sprang up like one pursued, and got away into the night, leaving Kate and Fraser together by the fire. But the spectre of the manse surely pursued me. I heard its soft but heavy footsteps coming in my wake. I heard its old laughter in the dark behind me. And I sickened and faltered, and was in fear beyond all human fear of an enemy.

The next day I told Fraser he must leave the manse; I would build him a shooting lodge on any part of my estate that he preferred.

"No," he said, "no. I have grown to love the old place I never feel alone there"

I looked in his eyes searching after his meaning

"I would rather pull down the manse," I said

In reply he touched with his forefinger the lease I had signed with him, which lay on his writing table.

"You cannot, my friend," he said.

I cannot do anything that I would I am driven on a dark road by the creature with the whip that is surely after every man who once yields to his worst desires.

Just after this I received a visit from Mr Mackenzie, the new minister, a young and fervent, but not very knowledgable man, whose zeal was red hot but incompetent, and who would have died for the faith he could never properly expound, like many young ministers of our Church. The little man was in a twisting turmoil of distress, and was moved, so he said, to deal very plainly with me. I bade him deal on. It seemed that his flock was becoming infected with atheism, which spread, like the plague, from the old manse. Even the old began to look askance at the Bible that had been their only book of age, and to shiver wantonly at the inevitable approach of death The young minister cried denunciation upon Fraser, like a vague-minded, but angry, Jonah before a provincial Nineveh.

"Turn him out, Mr. Ralston; drive him forth," he ejaculated "What is his rent to you? What is his money in comparison with the immortal souls of men? Away with him, away with him!"

I mentioned the small matter of the lease. The young minister, with a quivering scarlet face, replied, stammering—

"A lease! But—but your own wife, she is—is——"

"I do not discuss her," I said sternly.

"Well, but they are deserting the services. You see that yourself. They will not come to hear me preach. They will not listen to me."

The man was tasting bitterness. He was almost crying. I was terribly sorry for him. Yet all I could do was to think of the spectre at the manse and answer—"I can do nothing."

His words were true. Carlounie's soul was being devoured as by a plague. A colony of unbelievers was springing up in the midst of the beautiful woods and the mountains. Soon the evil fame of the place began to spread abroad, and men in distant parts of Scotland to speak of "daft Carlounie." The matter weighed intolerably upon me, and at last became a fixed idea. I could think of nothing else but this devil's home in the hills, this haunted and harassed centre of doom and darkness which was my possession and in which I lived. I fell into silence. I ceased to stir abroad beyond my own land. It seemed to me that Carlounie should keep strict quarantine, should be isolated, and that each person who went over its borders carried a strange infection and was guilty of murder. I forbade Kate to drive beyond my estates.

"I never wish to," she said.

And I knew that where Fraser was she was happy. He had her soul fast by this, or, it would be truer to say the spectre of the manse had both him and her. And he aged apace, and bore on his countenance the stamp of evil. And I brooded and brooded upon the whole matter. But from whatever point I started I came back to the manse and to the spectre dwelling in it with Hugh Fraser. I had given death to Dr. Wedderburn, in return for the life so miraculously given to me; and now his spirit, retained in its ancient abiding place, spread death about it in its turn. This was, and is, my conviction. The influence of the departed clings to roof, to walls, to floors, leans on the accustomed window seat, trembles by the bed-head, sits by the hearthstone, stands, invisible, in the passage way. *To kill it one must destroy its home.* It was my duty to kill it, therefore it was my duty to destroy the manse. This thought at length took complete possession of me, and, following it, I strove in every imaginable way to oust Fraser from the house among the sycamores. But he would not go. He loved the place, he said. He stood by his lease, and I was powerless.

Oh God, I have—surely I have—my excuse for what I have done! I meant to be a saviour, not a destroyer! I would have restored Fraser and my poor Kate to their freedom of heart. That was what I meant. Aye, but the grey traveller fought against me. Shut up here by night in my house, on the verge of—that which I cannot, dare not speak of, I declare that I am guiltless. Let him bear the burden, him alone! In these last moments, before my deed is known, I write the truth, that men may exonerate me. This is the truth.

Overwhelmed with this idea that Carlounie must be rescued, that Hugh Fraser and Kate must be rescued, from this damnation that was preying upon them, I determined secretly on the destruction of the manse in which the spectre of the Doctor stayed to work such evil. But to do this I must first make sure that Hugh Fraser was at a distance, and that his small household—he only kept two servants, hired from the village—were away from the haunted dwelling. I, therefore, suggested to Fraser that he should come and spend a week with me and give his maids a holiday. After a little demur, and drawn, I see now, by his hidden passion for Kate, he accepted my invitation. He dismissed the maids to their homes for a week, and moved over to us. When the minister knew of it he no doubt fully included me in his prayers for the damnation of those who worked

evil among his flock. Will he ever read these pages, I wonder? Kate was now an avowed atheist, and she and Fraser were continually together, glorying in their complete freedom from old prejudices and their new outlook upon life. They had, I heard them say, broken through the ties that bound poor terrified Christians. And when they said this they smiled the one upon the other. I did not then know why. Meanwhile I was preparing for my deed of redemption, as I called it, and meant it to be. I was resolved to go out by night to the empty manse and secretly to set it in flames. It stood alone. The country people slept soundly at night. I calculated that if I chose midnight for my act none would see the flames; and ere the people woke at dawn the manse and the spectre within it would be destroyed for ever. Such was my belief, such the spirit in which I prepared myself for this strange work.

V.

THE RETURN OF THE GREY TRAVELLER.

I WRITE these last words after the dead of night, towards the coming of the dawn. Ere the light is grey in the sky, I shall be away to the burn to meet him—the grey traveller. He is there waiting for me. He has come back. I go to meet him, and I shall never return. Carlounie will know my face no more. All is done as he ordained. My words have been as deeds, have marched on inevitably to actual deeds. Long ago he said that sometimes, even as we can never go back from things that we have done, we can never go back from things that we have said. So, indeed, it is.

According to my fixed intention, I determined on a night for the destruction of the manse. The house was old, and would burn like tinder. I should break into it through the window of the study, which was never shuttered. I should set fire to the interior at several points, and escape in the darkness of the night. By dawn the accursed place would be a ruin, and then—then I looked for a new era. Fool! fool! I looked to see the burden of the vile influence of the spectre lifted from the soul of Fraser, and so from the soul of Kate which was infected by him. I looked to see my people sane and satisfied as of old, Carlounie no more a plague spot in the land, that poor and zealous man, the minister, calm and at rest with his little faithful flock once more. All this I looked for confidently. And so, when the black and starless night of my deed came I was happy and serene. That night Kate pleaded a headache, and went to bed very early—before nine. She begged me not to come to her room to bid her good night, as she wanted perfect quiet and sleep. All unsuspecting, I agreed to her request. Soon after she had gone, Fraser, who had seemed heavy with unusual fatigue all through the evening, also went off to bed, and I was left alone. But it was not yet time for me to start on my errand of the darkness. The burning manse would surely attract attention before midnight. People might be out and about in the village. A belated ploughman might be on his way home by the lane that skirted the privet hedge. I must wait till all were sleeping. The time seemed very long. Once I fancied I heard a movement in the house—again I dreamed that soft and hurried footsteps upon the gravel outside broke on the silence. But I said to myself that I was nervous, highly strung because of my strange project, that my imagination tricked me. At last the hour came. Without going upstairs I drew on my thickest overcoat, took my cap and a heavy stick, opened the hall

door and passed out into the night. It was still and very cold, and the voice of the burn came loudly to my ears. Treading quietly, I made my way into the road and set forth along it in the direction of the manse. The ground was hard, and scarcely had I gone a few yards before I thought that some one was furtively following me. I stopped rather uneasily and listened, but heard nothing. I went on, and again seemed aware of distant footsteps treading gently behind me. The sound made me suppose that some one of my household must be after me, moved by curiosity as to the reason of my present pilgrimage; but I was not minded to be watched, so I turned sharply, yet very softly, around, and faced the way I had come. I encountered no one, nor did I any longer catch the patter of feet. So, reckoning that my nerves must be playing with me, I pursued my way. But the whole of the distance between my dwelling and the manse I seemed vaguely to hear a noise of one treading behind me. And, although I said to myself that there was nobody out beside myself, I was filled with the stir of a shifting uneasiness. I entered the lonely and narrow lane that led beside the manse, and presently arrived in front of the house, when what was my astonishment to perceive a light gleaming in the study window! My hand was on the gate when it went out, and all the front of the house was black and eyeless. For so brief a moment had I seen the light, that I was moved to think that it, too, existed, like the sound of steps, only in my excited brain. Nevertheless I did not go up at once to the house, but paced the lane for a full half-hour, always—so it seemed to me—tracked by some one. But since I kept turning about, and the footfalls were always at my back, I grew certain that they were nothing more nor less than a fantasy on my part. It must have been well after twelve when I summoned courage to enter the garden and to approach the manse. The steps, I thought, followed me to the gate and then paused, as if a sentinel were posted there to keep a watch. Arrived at the stone step which preceded the hall door, I too paused in my turn and listened. Did the spectre that inhabited this abode know of my coming, of my purpose? Was it crouching within, like some frantic shadow, fearful of its impending fate? Or was it, perhaps, preparing to attack, to repel me? Strangely, I had now no fear of it, or of anything. I was calm. I felt that my deed was one of rescue, even though, by performing it, I wrought destruction. I moved to the study window, and was about to smash in the glass with my heavy stick, when an idea came to me to try the hall door. I put my hand upon it, and found it not locked. This opening of the door sent a shiver through me, and a ghastly sense of the occupation of this deserted abode. I was filled again with an acute consciousness of the indwelling spectre, whom, in truth, I came to murder. But, I reasoned, "This door has been left unbarred by the carelessness of Fraser's servants—that is all."

I stood on the lintel, struck a match and set it to a candle end which I drew from my coat pocket. The flame burned up, showing the narrow passage, the umbrella stand, the doors on either side. I entered the study softly, looking swiftly on all sides of me as I did so. Did I expect to see a vision of Dr. Wedderburn lounging at the table, his fingers thrust into a Bible? I scarcely know, but I saw nothing except the grimly standing furniture, the lamp on the table, the vacant chairs, the books in their shelves. I listened. There was no rustle of the spectre that I came to kill. Did it watch me? Did it see me there? I set fire to the room, passed quickly to the chamber on the other side of the passage, from thence to the kitchen and the dining parlour, leaving a track of dwarf flames behind me. The means of destruction I had prepared and carried with me. They availed. When I once more reached the garden, the ground floor of the

manse was in a blaze. But now came the incredible event which I must chronicle before I go down to the burn for the last time.

Having gained the garden, I waited there in the darkness to watch my work progress. I saw the light within the manse, at first a twinkle, grow to a steady glare. I heard the faint crackle of the burning rooms increase to a soft and continuous roar. And as I watched, and listened, a mighty sense of relief ran through me. Thus did I burn up my past! thus did I sacrifice grandly and gladly the ill spirit my wild desires had evoked! 'Thus—thus!' All the base of the manse was red-hot, when, on a sudden, I heard a great shout that seemed to come from the sky. Light sprang in an upper window. There followed a sound like the smash of glass, and I saw two arms shoot out, the top part of a figure and a face framed in the glare. I deemed it the vision of the poor spectre that I destroyed. I looked upon it, and fancied I could detect the tortured lineaments of the Doctor, his accustomed gestures distorted by fear and fury. But then I seemed to see behind him another figure struggling, and to hear the failing scream of a woman. But the flames from below leaped to the roof. The floors fell in with an uproar. The figure, or figures, disappeared.

Trembling, I turned to go, my mind shuddering at the thought of the apparition I had seen. I got into the lane and hastened towards home. Soon the burning manse was out of sight and I was swallowed up in the intense darkness.

Now, as I went along, a terrible and very peculiar sensation came upon me. I heard no footsteps. All was silence. Yet I seemed to be aware that I was closely companioned, that at my very side something—I knew not what—walked, keeping pace with me. And so close did I believe this thing to be that at moments I even felt it pressing against me like a slim figure in the night. Once, when it thus nestled to me, as if in affection, I could not refrain from crying out aloud. I stretched forth my hands to grasp this horror of the darkness, but found nothing, and pursued my road in a sweat of apprehension. And still the thing was certainly with me, and seemed, I thought, to praise me as I walked, as the good man is praised on his journey. My great horror was that this creature that I could not see, could not hear, could not feel, and yet was so sharply conscious of, was *well disposed towards me*. My heart craved its hatred, but it loved me, I knew. My soul demanded its curses, but I almost heard it bless me as I moved. My knees knocked together, my limbs were turned to wax, as it was borne in upon me that I had surely done this terror that walked in darkness a service of some kind. To be pursued in fury by one of the dreadful beings that dwell in the borderland beyond our sight is sad and dreary. But to be followed thus by one as by a dog, to be fawned upon and caressed—this is appalling. I longed to shriek aloud. I broke into a run, and, like one demented, gained the gate of Carlounie, but always the thing was with me, full of joy and laudation. At the house door I paused, facing round. I was moved to address this thing I could not see.

"Who is it that walks with me?" I cried; and my voice was high and strained.

A voice I know, young, clear, level, a little formal, answered out of the darkness,—"It is I."

It was the voice of the grey traveller whom I had seen long ago by the burnside. I leaned back against the door, and my shoulders shook against it.

"What do you want of me?"

"I come to thank you."

"What, then, have I done?"

"You have brought the tribute money."

I did not understand, and I answered,—

"No. One soul I may have lost, but two I have saved to-night. For I have slain the spectre that preyed upon them, and I have set them free from bondage."

The voice answered,—

"*Go into the house and see.*"

Then again I was filled with apprehension. I turned to go in at my door, and, as I did so, I heard footsteps treading in the direction of the burn, and a fading voice which cried, like an echo,—

"And then come to me"

And, as the voice died, I heard the rush of sheep in the night.

* * * * * *

Filled with nameless fear and a cold apprehension, I entered the house, and, led by some cruel instinct, made my way to Kate's room. The lamp she always had at night burned dimly on the dressing-table and cast a grave radiance upon an empty bed.

What could this mean?

I stole to the room of Fraser, bearing the lamp with me. His chamber was also untenanted, but on the quilt of the bed lay a piece of paper written over. I took it up and read—with the sound of the burn in my ears·

"You stole her from me. I take back my own. To-night we stay at the old manse. To-morrow we shall be far away. HUGH FRASER"

The paper dropped from my hand upon the quilt. A woman's scream rang in my ears above the roar of flames. I understood.

* * * * * *

The tribute money has been paid.

I go down to the burn. The grey traveller is waiting there for me.

ROBERT HICHENS.
FREDERIC HAMILTON.

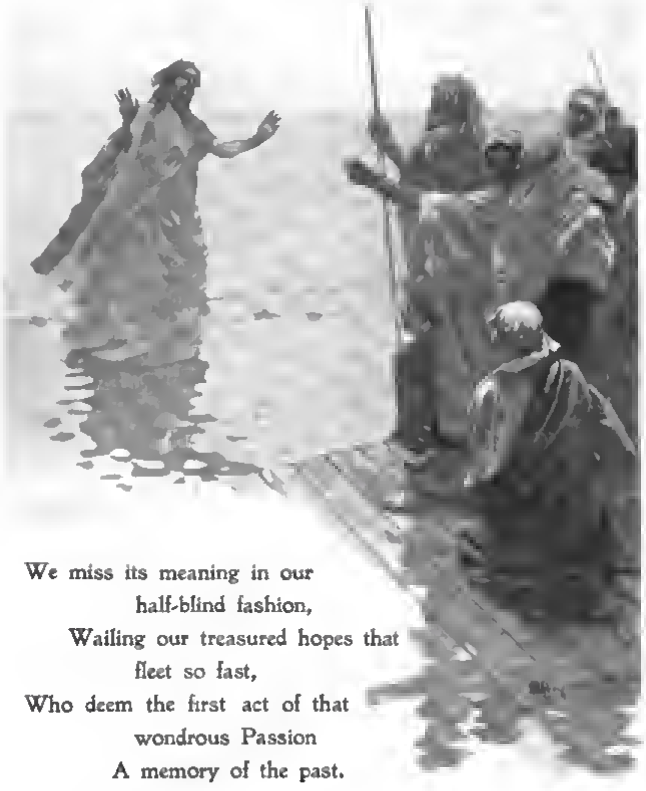
"GLORIA IN EXCELSIS."

OUR lives are strangely linked by time and season
To vanished recollections grave or glad,
So deeply hid we scarce could give a reason,—
Yet Christmas makes us sad!

Our hearts are ill attuned to youth's light laughter,
The festal throng, the music gay and sweet,
That like some joyous spirit flashes after
The dancers' flying feet.

For some,
perchance, the old
hearth-fires are dying,
And jostling crowds hide friend and
kin from sight;
And some, alas! in far-off graves are
lying
Who once made Christmas bright!

Have we no share, then, in Angelic
Praises?
No place amid the children's inno-
cent glee?
No part in that great Hymn the Church upraises
For Christ's Nativity?



We miss its meaning in our
half-blind fashion,
Wailing our treasured hopes that
fleet so fast,
Who deem the first act of that
wondrous Passion
A memory of the past.

The joy of Christmastide is something deeper—
As real as when the heavenly host came
down,
And eager shepherds roused some toil-worn
sleeper
In David's royal town.

Veiling in human flesh the Godhead's splendour,
To-day, as in those distant ages dim,
The Babe of Bethlehem, with entreaty tender,
Draws all men unto Him.

What tho' we miss some sweetness in Earth's story,
For us again the Holy Child is born—
All human life is radiant with the glory
Of that First Christmas Morn!

CHRISTIAN BURKE.

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl called Janet, who lived with her step-mother near the sea-shore. Janet's father had died when she was quite a child, and her step-mother was very unkind to her. In fact, if it had not been for Dame Sybil, Janet's life would have been a terribly hard and unhappy one. Dame Sybil had come, nobody knew from where, into Janet's neighbourhood, about five years before this story opens. She arrived one stormy night and took up her abode in a little deserted cottage half-way up the cliff.

Dame Sybil was an old, old woman, with a bent back and hooked nose and chin. People called her a witch, but she was a white witch. She always did good to those who sought her. The fishermen came to her for charms before they went out fishing, and she always gave them what they asked for without making them pay any money for it. Whenever a person was sick the first thing the friends did was to seek Dame Sybil's advice, and if *she* could not cure them nobody else could.

Janet and she had struck up a close friendship, and, whenever Janet's step-mother allowed her to do so, the girl ran off to Dame Sybil's cottage to have a chat, and in this way she learnt a great deal about the big world which lay inland over the hills and seaward across the blue water.

One summer's day Janet went down to the shore to bathe in the sea. At the spot where she was accustomed to bathe there was a rock running some little way into the sea. At certain times of the tide the rock was partly uncovered, and showed five black knobs which Janet used as stepping-stones. When she had reached the fifth knob she knew that the water was clear of rock and deep enough to plunge in and to swim about comfortably. But to-day she found, to her surprise, when she reached the fifth knob, that there was a sixth beyond it. It was not like the other knobs, but a huge, round boulder with seaweed growing over it, and as the waves advanced and went back, this seaweed moved to and fro and looked just like the hair on a man's head. Janet knelt down and put out her hand to touch the rock. She caught hold of the seaweed and pulled, and, as she did so, the rock began to rise out of the water, and Janet found herself confronted,

'Janet went down to the shore to bathe in the sea"

not with a rock at all, but with an enormous and very unattractive human face. The face was a pale green in colour. The eyes were lustreless like those of a fish. In place of a nose there were two small holes, and the mouth was nothing more than a narrow slit like the opening into a money box. Janet sprang to her feet in alarm and stepped back to the knob behind her, but the head, instead of falling into the water when she let go her hold on it, rose out still farther, and was followed by the upper part of the body belonging to it. Then two large seaweedy arms with hands, or feet—Janet did not know which they were—webbed like those of a duck, rose out of the water and rested on the rock on which Janet was standing, and a deep, rumbling voice came from the creature's throat, saying,—

"Have you courage?"

Janet did not stop to answer, but sped back to the shore as fast as her legs could carry her. When she found herself on dry land again she cast one terrified glance back, and, much to her relief, saw that the horrible creature had disappeared.

There was, of course, no bathing for Janet that day. She was not a coward, but an experience like this was enough to daunt any one.

Hastily huddling on her clothes she ran home, intending to go on to Dame Sybil to tell her of her adventure. When, however, she reached home, she found that her step-mother was very cross and had so many things for her to do that, by the time she had done them all, it was much too late for her to pay her purposed visit to the Dame. Janet was very tired when she went to bed, and slept well. The morning brought her fresh courage. She felt ashamed of herself for what she called her nervous fancies of the previous day, and determined to be brave and take her bath as usual. But when she arrived at the rocks her courage gave

way, and she thought to herself that before undressing she would investigate matters and make sure that the sixth knob was really not there However, it *was* there, and the seaweed hair waving to and fro as the water passed backwards and forwards over it.

Some curious fascination, which she could not overcome, seemed to force Janet to touch the thing again, and she gently pulled a piece of the seaweed with her fingers Again—as yesterday—the head, the body, the arms rose out of the water, and again the hollow voice issued from the slit-like lips, saying,—

"Have you courage?"

Janet retreated, not so rapidly this time but that she was able to note two points. In the first place, the face bore a wistful, eager, beseeching expression, which, when she thought it over afterwards, quite went to her heart In the second place, ugly as the thing was, its ugliness was not a wicked, but a kind and good ugliness.

Janet did not go home this time, but hurried up the path which led to Dame Sybil's cottage The Dame was seated outside in the sunshine knitting some garment, and when Janet appeared she invited her in Janet poured out her story in as few words as possible, but as she was breathless, partly from her climb and partly from fright, this took some little time Dame Sybil did not interrupt her, but only nodded her head from time to time during the recital. When Janet had finished Dame Sybil said,—

"You should have answered his question. He is the Sea Prince of the Pearl Islands, and is under an enchantment laid upon him by the wicked magician of the Burning Mountain. You can free him from the enchantment if you wish. Now look, but do not speak"

As the Dame said this she drew aside a curtain which hung in the corner of the room, and revealed a mirror. At first Janet saw nothing on the surface of the mirror but a kind of blurred mist This soon rolled away, and showed her the handsomest young man she had ever seen. He was so handsome that Janet felt sure that he must be a prince. He was dressed in sea-green trimmed with silver, and he looked on Janet with smiling eyes. Janet moved forward, and was about to take shyly the hand which the Prince offered her, when the blur came over the surface of the mirror once more and the vision vanished. She turned round, and found Dame Sybil eyeing her keenly.

"That," said the Dame, "is the Sea Prince as he really is. Will you try now to rescue him?"

"Yes," said Janet without hesitation, "I will."

"You will find it a hard task," said the Dame,—"far harder than you imagine"

"I will do what I can for him," said Janet firmly, "if only you will tell me what to do"

"I can only tell you very little," replied Dame Sybil "You must seek further directions from others This I am permitted to say The means of freeing the Prince from the terrible form which he now wears is to be sought in the Island of Mussels. You must bring me the wooden doll from that island Go to-morrow to the rocks at the hour when they are uncovered Face the transformed Prince boldly. When he asks you if you have courage, answer 'Yes' Then he will tell you to prove it, and you must kiss him on brow and eyes and lips After that he will tell you what to do. Now go. I am tired, and long to be alone"

Indeed, Dame Sybil seemed to Janet to have aged greatly during the last ten minutes. She kissed her lightly and ran home.

"'That,' said the Dame, 'is the Sea Prince as he really is.'"

Next day Janet was down at the rocks at the appointed time, and did all that Dame Sybil had told her to do. When it came to putting her lips four times to that dank, cadaverous face, the poor girl's heart almost failed her. But the thought of the Prince as he had appeared to her in the mirror gave her courage, and she fulfilled the hateful task. Janet thought that she saw a gleam of joy light up the expressionless features of the sea monster, but he only said—

"Thank you, Janet. Be ready to go with my messenger who will come to your window exactly at midnight."

Then he sank into the sea and disappeared.

Midnight came, and found Janet, I need hardly say, very wide awake. The clock had just finished striking the hour, when she heard tap, tap, tap, on the glass. For a moment she hesitated, and then, flinging open the window, let in, fluttering from the dark night, a little sea swallow, white breasted, grey-backed, black-headed, and entirely self-possessed.

The sea swallow was the first to speak.

"We are a little late as it is," he said, "so we must lose no time. I should have been here five seconds earlier if the wind outside had not been so high. Now get on my back, please, and we'll be off at once."

"'How can I get on the back of a little bird like you?'"

Janet could hardly help laughing outright, even at the risk of hurting the sea swallow's feelings.

"Get on your back!" she asked. "How can I get on the back of a little bird like you?"

The sea swallow was by this time on the floor at Janet's feet.

"Put your hand on my neck," he said.

Janet did so, and in a moment began to dwindle down until her height was no more than three inches and a half. She started back in alarm, leaving her hold on the sea swallow's neck, and at once shot up to her full height.

"Now," said the sea swallow impatiently, "you know all about it. We can't wait here all night. Do get on my back and let us start."

Janet touched his neck again, and when she found herself small enough to do so, clambered on his back.

"Put your hand under my right wing," said the sea swallow.

Janet did as he told her, and found a golden thread, with which, by his direction, she bound herself firmly to her seat. Then she felt under his left wing, and found there a silver thread, which the sea swallow said she was to keep carefully in her pocket.

"Are you ready?" he asked; and on her saying that she was, the sea swallow

"Each time the sea swallow caught a fish.

fluttered up to the window and launched himself out into the night.

Janet found the motion pleasant enough, although the swiftness of the bird's flight rather took away her breath. As the morning broke over the blue sea she began thoroughly to enjoy her journey. The sea swallow had, however, a disagreeable habit of suddenly stopping in his flight and plunging head foremost into the water whenever he saw any particularly tempting-looking fish swimming beneath him. At first this action of his made Janet feel dizzy and uncomfortable, and she begged him to be so good as to discontinue it. He paid not the slightest attention to her, however, and after a time Janet became used to the headers. Each time the sea swallow caught a fish he ate the body himself and gave the head to Janet, telling her to string it on a silver thread. In this way she collected about thirty little heads, which, in obedience to the sea swallow's orders, she made into a necklace to fasten round her neck. By this time the air was getting very cold, and Janet was glad to nestle into the soft, warm feathers on the bird's back. Colder and colder it grew, bluer and bluer became sea and sky, when the sea swallow perched on an iceberg which rose out of the water, and which, from her place of concealment, she failed to observe.

"Now," said the sea swallow, "untie yourself, go into that cave, and ask the Witch of the Blue Waters, who lives there, to tell you what you want to know."

Janet was trembling with cold and fear, but she entered the cave and found there an old woman dressed in a blue robe, with nose and cheeks the same colour as her dress and her teeth chattering. As soon as she saw Janet the old woman said,—

"What seeks the maiden with the necklace of fish heads?"

"I seek," said Janet, as boldly as she could, "the wooden doll of the Island of Mussels."

"What will you give me," asked the old woman, "if I tell you how to find it?"

"I have nothing to give you, I fear," replied Janet.

The woman looked at her with hungry eyes.

"It is cold here," she muttered, as though speaking to herself. "bitter cold,

"The woman looked at her with hungry eyes.

sometimes. The sun never looks into this cave. Now, your hair, maiden, is made of sunbeams If you would give it to me it would warm and cheer my heart, and then, perhaps, I could tell you what to do in order to find the wooden doll of the Island of Mussels."

"My hair?" cried poor Janet aghast. It was her chief beauty, falling as it did

in soft, golden, sunbeamy masses down her back. "What will the Sea Prince think of me?" she asked herself, "if he sees me without any hair on my head? Never mind," she went on bravely, "let him think what he will. I must save him, at any cost, from that dreadful enchantment. Very well," she said aloud, bending her head meekly forward. "take my hair, since I have nothing else to give you."

It was the work of a few seconds for the old hag to seize a razor shell, which lay on the ground, to pass it over Janet's neck and head, and to sever close to its roots her beautiful hair. It fell on the floor of the cave a glowing mass, and the witch of the blue waters huddled herself over it, held her hands to its light, and crooned to herself some wordless song. She seemed to have forgotten all about Janet till the latter spoke again.

"Well, what must I do to find the wooden doll of the Island of Mussels?"

"Seek my sister of the Brown Waters, and ask her," mumbled the witch; and nothing more could Janet extract from her.

Sadly she turned and left the cave, and sought the sea swallow.

"Mount my back again," said he, when he had heard her story. "We have a long way south to go to find the home of the Witch of the Brown Waters."

Janet resumed her seat, and off they set once more. Southward they flew, over strange seas and lands, till the sky became like copper and the blue water sandy and turbid. And there, on a lonely sand-bank, sat the Witch of the Brown Waters, clad in brown, with her skin as brown as her dress from exposure to the sun. When Janet stood before her, the Witch of the Brown Waters asked, or rather gasped, for the heat was excessive and she could hardly speak:

"What seeks the maiden without hair and with the necklace of fish heads?"

Janet explained her errand, and the witch told her the price she would have to pay for the information.

"It is hot here," she said—"so hot. No blessed rain falls, no breath of cool air comes. Give me the fresh blueness in your eyes, and I will tell you what to do."

As nothing short of this would satisfy the witch, Janet had to submit; and the witch passed her hands across her eyes, and gathered from them their fresh blueness. She gloated over her treasure, and in reply to Janet's question would only say:

"Seek my sister of the Grey Waters, and ask her."

"The sea swallow bore Janet, weary and heartbroken, to the grey rock rising out of a grey sea, and surrounded, day and night, by a thick mist, upon which dwelt a witch with a grey face and a grey dress.

"What seeks the white-eyed maiden without hair, and with the necklace of fish heads?" asked the witch.

Janet told her.

"And what price will she pay me?" said the witch. "It is weary living here in the midst of this unchanging greyness. If I had the beautiful colour in your cheeks to look at sometimes, I should find it less dreary. Give that to me and I will tell you what to do."

"What does it matter?" thought Janet. "The Prince would not look at me now whatever my cheeks were like. And rescue him I must and will. Very well," she said to the Witch of the Grey Waters, "you may have the colour from my cheeks if you wish."

The witch pointed to a little rocky pool by her side.

"Bathe your face there," she said.

Janet bathed her face, and the colour passed from her cheeks into the water.

The witch bent over the pool and gazed into it with eager eyes; and it was only on Janet repeating her question that she muttered:

"Fly due west till you come to an isle with three black mountains on it. Two of the mountains are of the same size, but the middle one is higher, and out of its summit there issues a column of smoke. That is the Island of Mussels. On the beach sits my blind sister, who will tell you more."

Westward flew the sea swallow, till the island with the three mountains, which Janet knew to be the Island of Mussels, lay beneath them. Then the sea swallow perched on a rock by the shore.

"I may not go farther," he said to Janet, and, raising his voice, he cried out to the witch: "Here is a maiden who would ask a question of the Witch of the Island of Mussels!"

"The maiden who would ask a question of me must approach with bare feet and head!"

"Poor Janet had therefore to pull off her shoes and stockings and walk over the rocks to where the witch was sitting. The rocks were covered with mussels, which gave the name to the island, and at every step which Janet took her feet were cut and lacerated by the shells, which pointed upwards, and were as sharp as so many knives. Janet stood before the witch and told her tale.

"The wooden doll of the Island of Mussels," said the witch, when Janet had ceased speaking, "lies in the innermost of three caves. The entrance lies before you."

Janet looked up, and saw a black opening in the foot of the central mountain.

"The first cave is the Cave of Winds. Whoso enters it has his hair seized and torn out by the roots by the winds, and is cast senseless and bleeding outside, never, generally, to enter it again. But if he does enter it, and passes through, he comes to the Cave of White Light, the glare of which takes the colour from the eyes, and leaves him white-eyed and disfigured for evermore. Beyond the Cave of White Light lies the Cave of Black Darkness. Whatsoever living thing, be it man or animal or plant, breathes a breath of air in this cave, loses all colour from the cheeks, and never recovers it. In this innermost cave lies the wooden doll of the Island of Mussels. If you would find it, you must feel about with hands and feet till you touch it. Then seize it and begone. But take heed that no ray of light in the second cave reaches its eyes, and that the winds of the outer cave touch not its hair. I have told you all!"

Janet found that it was as the witch had told her. Only the winds, though they blew and beat her about mercilessly, could not injure her, for she had no hair on which they could seize. The white light, though it nearly blinded her, could not take the colour from eyes that were colourless already: the black darkness of the innermost cave, though it threatened to suffocate her, could not bleach her skin whiter than it was bleached when she entered. She felt about the floor until her foot came in contact with a piece of wood. Hastily stooping she felt it, and found that it was shaped like a child's doll. This, then, was what she sought. Clasping it in her arms and folding its face against her bosom Janet sped out of the Cave of Black Darkness into that of White Light, but no ray of light did she permit to reach the eyes of her doll. Thence she passed once more into the outer cave—the Cave of the Winds. Here, notwithstanding her care, a small wisp of the doll's hair escaped the folds of the dress and in an instant it was torn out and whirled away. Janet thought that the wooden doll gave a shudder in her arms when this took place, but of this she was not sure. It seemed an unlikely thing for it to do. But Janet saw,

when she had reached the outside and was hastening down to the shore, that some blood was oozing from the wood at the spot whence the wisp of hair had been torn out. The Witch of the Mussel Isle had disappeared when Janet reached the shore, so she hastened across the rocks, unmindful now of the sharp shells, till she found herself by the side of her faithful sea swallow.

"Mount! mount quickly!" he cried; which Janet did, finding to her immense relief that the wooden doll diminished in size at the same rate as she herself. This time the sea swallow flew like the wind. He seemed to have no inclination either to talk or eat, only now and then he cast a terrified glance behind him and sped on more swiftly than before.

At length Janet came in sight of her own home, and the sea swallow heaved a sigh of relief.

"We shall soon be there now," he said encouragingly. They were the first words he had spoken since they left the Island of Mussels. "There is Dame Sybil's cottage on the hill side," and Janet saw the spot of white to which the sea swallow referred.

She was looking at it intently, wondering to herself how it was all going to end, when she was startled by a shrill cry of alarm uttered by the bird. He was looking back over his shoulder and seemed to have grown as pale with terror as it is possible for a sea swallow to grow. Janet followed the direction of his eyes, and saw a large, black pirate gull, a bird well known on that coast, bearing down upon them as swiftly as his wings could carry him.

Now, it is the habit of the pirate gull to chase other gulls and make them yield up any fish they may have caught and be in the act of swallowing. But the sea swallow had not, as I said, caught a single fish since he had left the Isle, and Janet could not make out what the object was of the pirate gull in thus pursuing them.

A few words gasped by the tern in an agony of fear explained matters.

"It is the Enchanter of the Isle of Mussels—the deadly enemy of the Sea Prince. He has taken the form of a pirate gull. If he catches us before we reach Dame Sybil he will make an end of us all." And, exhausted as he was, the gallant little bird redoubled his efforts.

But swift as are the wings of a sea swallow, those of a pirate gull are swifter, and instant by instant the Enchanter drew nearer and nearer to his prey. Yet as he drew nearer the white face of Dame Sybil's cottage grew larger. She herself was watching the race with terrible excitement in her eyes. The birds reached the window almost simultaneously, and passed through. The sea swallow sank exhausted to the floor. The pirate gull, unable to check himself, flew violently against the opposite wall—dashed out his brains, and there was an end of him.

The fear and excitement of the chase had caused Janet to faint; but Dame Sybil, by means of her simples, soon brought her round, and then turned her attention to the faithful sea swallow, whom, after some difficulty, she managed to revive. Janet unfastened herself from his back and presented the wooden doll to Dame Sybil, who took it in her arms and hugged and kissed it. Then she handed it back to Janet, saying,—

"There is still a little more for you to do. Kiss him on brow and eyes and lips, and throw him into that seething cauldron which is on the fire."

This Janet did, and the doll was no sooner under the water than the whole room became filled with a mist so thick that she could see nothing. The mist cleared away as quickly as it had arisen, and what was Janet's astonishment to see, in place of old Dame Sybil, a beautiful and stately lady dressed like a queen, who smiled most graciously upon her, while from the fireplace there advanced, with outstretched

"'If it please your Majesty.'"

hands, the very Prince who had appeared in the mirror! He took Janet's unresisting hands in his, as she stood abashed, and drawing her to him, asked her to be his wife.

At that moment Janet, her heart throbbing with delight at his words, caught sight of herself in the mirror. Gently withdrawing her hands, she said,—

"No, Prince, I am not beautiful enough to be your princess. You must seek a wife elsewhere. My task is accomplished: let me go now to seek Dame Sybil."

The lady stepped forward and said, "You need not seek far, Janet. I am Dame

Sybil—the mother of the Sea Prince. I intended you for one another. As for your beauty—here is the golden hair," saying which she produced the tresses which Janet had parted with and placed them on her head again. "And here is the bright blueness of your eyes," passing her hand across her face; "and here, in this golden basin, are the roses of your cheeks. Bathe your face in the water."

Janet obeyed, and when she looked at the mirror again she saw that her face was as it had been of old.

"Yes," said the lady, smiling at Janet's perplexity, "I was each of those three cruel old witches. I, too, was the witch of the Island of Mussels. It was a condition of the undoing of the spell which held my son that a maiden should sacrifice for his sake that which maidens hold most dear. He was the wooden doll and the sea monster alternately, but only as the wooden doll could he be freed from the double enchantment laid upon him by that carrion there," and she pointed to the dead body of the pirate gull.

At that moment there entered a gentleman dressed in a pearl-grey coat, a white waistcoat and yellow knee-breeches, and stockings, and bearing in his hand a black velvet cap. He bowed profoundly to the lady, and said,—

"If it please your Majesty, your Majesty's carriage is waiting."

The Queen turned towards him.

"Ah! my faithful Lord Chamberlain," said she. "Janet," she continued, "I present to you the Lord Chamberlain, who shared our misfortunes under the form of a sea swallow, and to whose skill and courage we all owe so much."

Janet extended a hand, which the Lord Chamberlain knelt gracefully to kiss.

"I hope," he said, "that your Royal Highness will pardon any apparent discourtesy of which I may have been guilty during the course of recent events."

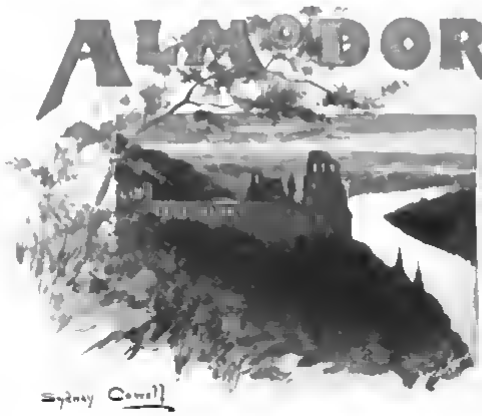
Janet smiled her forgiveness, and then turned to the Queen saying, "I can't come to your court in this dress;" and indeed her clothes, which were not of the newest when she started, had suffered much from the wear-and-tear of her adventure.

"Never mind the dress," said the lady: "there are plenty of dresses for you at the Palace. Look at the dowry you are bringing my son," and she called Janet's attention to the necklace of fish heads she was wearing

Great was the girl's astonishment to find each head changed into a pearl worth a king's ransom. And so they all got into the carriage, the Lord Chamberlain sitting behind, and drove off to the Palace, where the wedding festivities were kept up for three weeks, three days and eight hours, and where Janet and her Sea Prince lived happily ever afterwards.

E. P. Larken.

ALMODORO'S CUPID



ON a broad hillside overlooking the Neckar, and commanding a distant view of Heidelberg, stands the Villa Venedig—a name that, fixed thus amid scenes where local and historical traditions cluster, sounds strange to this day in German ears.

It has borne this singular appellation since the close of the seventeenth century, when Ritter von Racoczy, coming home to end his days in peace, so called it for the sake of the brilliant years he had lived in Venice, whereof rumour, even after this lapse of time, still has somewhat to say.

A famous drinker in his prime was this Racoczy, that could empty a gallon; and a heavy-handed fighter that cared neither for petronels nor musquets, but trusted in a steel mace of his mail-clad ancestors wherewith he had crushed the skulls of a dozen foemen; and ever, in youth as in age, whether campaigning or feasting, a lover of beautiful women. A handsome man, as may be seen from his portrait in velvet doublet and frilled hose, with a blue gauze scarf knotted at the shoulder, where perhaps the ladylove of that particular hour had bound it, thus lending colour to the popular belief that feminine hearts proved no less frail than the iron-bound heads of his enemies. It has even been whispered that Kunigunde, wife of the then Elector, whose last days were tinged with so mysterious and remorseful a melancholy, had not lived beyond the reach of her knightly neighbour's fascination. He looks from the wooden panel with soft bright eyes, and face close shaven and grizzling hair, and with right hand resting upon the mace he wielded to such good purpose. A middle-aged man in countenance and bearing, and altogether youthful for one who talks of coming home to die; but 'tis even there we read the devil's blessing of his friend and instructor Almodoro, the Venetian astrologer, who had set upon him as a gift the seal of maturity. Nor is it difficult to divine in the self-mastery of that intently thoughtful face the influence of Italian training. The bluff Teuton knights of old rarely look down upon us from their sanguinary centuries with eyes and lips so significant of dissimulation and patient pondering. And thus it comes that the traditions concerning Racoczy's life lose

nothing of their flavour as years go by, and that the honest folk are not yet weary of hearing of his sinister adventures and of the spell which kept him outwardly unchanged till one Good Friday night, the accursed night whereon Peter betrayed the Master, his heart, which was steeped in guile, shrivelled when, without a word of warning, the devil appeared and pointing claimed it for his own.

Merely to look at such a portrait and learn no more of the original than the whisperings of hearsay, is little better than reading the title of a closed volume. But our interest in Racoczy proceeds as much from a recital of the circumstances of his sojourn in Venice, attributed to the alchemist Almodoro, which is preserved in the library of the Villa Venedig, as from the likeness of him which in popular estimation is also the necromancer's handiwork. The book is a manuscript, leather bound and silver clasped, wherein, set forth in obscure and blurred Latin sentences, is a summary of strange sights and adventures, together with notes of solitary meditation upon the everlasting problem why joy so soon grows old, while sorrow is always young.

The Villa Venedig, whereof some small part is ancient and much has been restored, stands in a flower garden with an arbour and sun-dial and great coloured crystal globes to rejoice the German fancy with reflections of the eddying Neckar and of the sunshine and shade of the whispering trees. The house is a quaint mixture of columns, carved windows, dingy red-tiled roofs and irregular gables, with here and there a growth of vines against its weather-stained walls, that in summer bear their tiny blossoms to the chimney tops. In the hall are a carved fireplace, a dozen stiff-backed chairs, two or three rusty-looking antique tables, covered with *bibelots* and books, a settle, luxuriously piled with gaudy cushions, an *étagère* filled with Saxe, and a grandfather's clock that tinkles "Du, du, liegst mir am Hertzen" when the hours strike. The floor is laid with the original marble, and above the chimney hangs the master's portrait, the eyes whereof follow the beholder, move as he may. On the wall are souvenirs of Racoczy, such as a prodigiously thick pair of jack-boots, with one silver spur; a long-barrelled Turkish pistol, more or less damaged; a horse's curb-bit, with dangling fragments of leather; an hour-glass, the crystal broken and the sands run out, and a great leather bottle, which in campaigning days hung at his saddle-bow.

It was here, to the seclusion of this exquisite retreat, that Ritter von Racoczy came in 1689 from Venice, in time to see Heidelberg Castle in its final splendour, and to witness its burning from this hilltop. Here he died, some time later, and here in 1894 lived the widow of his last male descendant, with her daughter Doris, a girl of eighteen. At Villa Venedig their days had been little troubled. French and German governesses came and went, the Countess made occasional visits to a neighbouring city, where Doris had learned music and dancing, and at intervals some relative, an angular aunt of somebody's nephew, or a spectacled remotely-connected wiseacre, came to enliven their solitude. One of these visits was now approaching, though from a personage in marked contrast to their usual guests.

Hector von Falckenstein, a distant cousin aged four-and-twenty, had just taken his degree at the neighbouring university, and had entered upon that time of life when the spiritual eye catches its first glimpse of an ideal—something we fain would shape ourselves to be, something intimately present, yet immeasurably far away. He had graduated with honour, had invariably paid his debts, was fond of athletics and travel, loved sentimental musings, and bore upon his face two faint white duelling scars. Altogether a model student, and one who might go far and fare well provided he selected the right sort of steady, practical girl for a wife, and banished from his thoughts some romantic conception that was utterly perverting

him of a maiden descended from legendary heroes, possessed with the glamour of mediæval days, understanding their mysticism and cherishing the idyllic grace of their chivalry with its shining steel and crimson banners, all of which in this happy age of ours is little better than the fruitless fig-tree.

Such was the individual whom the Countess had invited for a week, also bidding Pastor Wendelin, that the young man might have some one to talk and smoke with at the late evening hours if, like the ordinary Bursche, he was given to lengthy disquisitions upon *wissenschaftliche* themes. He was received with warm welcome, and they presently went to dinner in German fashion at two o'clock. While doing justice to the good cheer, Hector puzzled himself to think of what it was that Doris, with her indefinable trace of sadness, reminded him: suddenly, with native sentimental imagining, he remembered that last Easter, footing it through the Thuringer Wald, a lilac bush stood by the way half in sunshine half in shade, touching the air with its faint, vague sweetness—and that was Doris. After coffee in the arbour, the pastor and Hector lighted their pipes and strolled down a shady promenade called the Philosopher's Walk, at the end of which, through a cut between the branches, is a view of the Neckarthal, with its forests and hillsides, where in springtime, when the amaranths are blooming, there floats across the fields and woodlands an inspiration that seems a refrain from that imagined land where amaranths are always in bloom—the land where we shall bid farewell only at the twilight of the longest summer day. But the young man's thoughts were already of Doris, and possibly the last object in the world a student wishes to gaze upon is his university town, even though it rest beneath the luminous shadow of Heidelberg Castle. He said to himself that any one might at first glance have pronounced Doris a pretty girl: she had fine features, a good figure, and the soft hazel eyes of old Racoczy. Moreover, she had an engaging way of listening, which always flatters the masculine heart; but more than all, he felt singularly interested by a vague perception that the girl was possessed by some subtle sorrow, some trouble of no ordinary degree, whose burden she perhaps bore alone. So strong became the youth's sympathetic feeling that he could no longer refrain from questioning his companion, and that with startling abruptness.

"Is Fraulein Doris betrothed?" he inquired suddenly, interrupting a learned disquisition.

"No," replied the pastor, turning quickly and stopping short. "What should make you suppose so?" he added, in evident astonishment.

"Oh, only that, begging your pardon, an absurd fancy recalled something wild and desperate in the impression she made upon me as of some such unhappiness as an ill suited betrothal."

The pastor glanced furtively right and left, drew his arm through Hector's and led him back along the Philosopher's Walk. "Betrothed, no," he murmured impressively, "but bewitched, yes. It is all that unblessed picture of Racoczy. Look at it carefully when we return to the house—glance at it from time to time, as often as you pass, and tell me to morrow if you see nothing. I do not believe a day passes without some slight movement of the face. It is not imagination—you will see for yourself that the lips in the picture wince, as well they may, for 'tis then Racoczy in hell sees Satan making ready the hot irons. In that man's wicked life happened many tragic events. The story of such deeds becomes lost, thank God, else who would wish to live! But can you, young man, deem such a presence, even in a picture, a happy or beneficent influence over a maiden's life?"

"But if the story be lost," objected the student meditatively, "what mischief

can it do?—or what harm is there in a portrait, even though it be that of an evil man?"

Wendelin shook his grey head mistrustfully, and for the first time in years suffered his pipe to go out. "Because," he answered, "we are all unconsciously under the influence of objects by which we are habitually surrounded. Too much of that man's hateful career is remembered not to dwell upon such parts of it as are stamped upon his features. It is known that from a soldier, the man of strife and orgie, he became a pupil of such as teach forbidden arts and a companion of goblins and incubi. He died . . and who shall say what may have been his ghastly awakening in another world, after contact with the lurid phantasms with which he had filled his days and nights in this!"

"You seem severe, master," answered the student, smiling and eyeing Wendelin curiously. "The Countess told me no such gruesome things, but on the contrary said that when the last hour of his life had come, he begged that a handful of fresh pansies be brought, and lay passing them through his fingers and pressing them to his lips, as though his fainting soul derived refreshment from their contact."

The good man was not, however, to be diverted from his judgment. "Look at him," he whispered under his breath when they stood presently in the hall; "the old campaigner's portrait is the typical embodiment of evil passions and of the accursed arts of his later days. Will you expect me to believe that such a boding presence exerts no witchery upon the promise of a young life that is daily brought within its contamination?"

"But how know you that the young life is even conscious of this subtle influence, or so much as cares who or what her sinister-visaged ancestor may have been?"

"Because," answered the priest, with quick emotion, "that picture is her evil genius. I deem it not impossible that the spirit of Racoczy revisits this last retreat of his old age; the country folk say so, and the servants as well; and you yourself have observed the shadow which the mere report of his apparitions has cast upon Doris."

"You believe, then, in haunted houses and *revenants*?" queried Hector, half banteringly.

"I cannot doubt their mystical pressure," answered Wendelin gravely; "neither can you. More than this," added the priest, wiping his brow, "let me say that Racoczy—or the figure in the picture—has acquired the same devilish ascendency twice or thrice before. The most authentic instance was that of Countess Clorinde, fifty years ago, which is vouched for by her own declaration that the picture was gaining a control so vast and more than human over her, that at length, realising the horror of this dead Racoczy's love, she fled from the villa and never more set foot within it."

"And what," queried Hector, as he scanned the details of the picture, "is that faint mark upon the Ritter's hand?—can it be a ring upon his finger?"

"That," answered the priest, pursing up his lips, "is a charm, a gift of the wizard Almodoro—nothing less than the ring wherewith a Doge of Venice wedded the Adriatic, goodness knows by what incantation recovered from the sea, and which embodied, as such things commonly do, the enchanter's familiar spirit. The ring is indicated, as you observe, very vaguely, but the Countess will tell you it was Racoczy's talisman, wherein lay the secret of all his cabala. Since it disappeared at his death, let us hope he took the mischievous thing with him to purgatory." And Wendelin took off his spectacles and laughed till his fat sides shook.

"'Look at him,' he whispered under his breath."

When Hector went to his room late that evening, he fell into a reverie upon the ring mysteriously recovered from the depths of the Adriatic and endowed with supernatural attributes, the face of the portrait that moved, and the honest pastor's evident terror of old Racoczy, whether on wood or in the infernal regions. At one moment the tale seemed fit for the nursery; at the next it assumed a character of weird and suggestive import. It is evident that some lives are wholly spent in the pursuit of an intangible ideal, as though, in very deed, some semblance of a vanished existence might return to beguile and pervert the reality of this life. He remembered how subject he had found himself to the emotions which a study of the lives of masterful men and women inspires: how one measures their ambitions and comprehends their doubts and disappointments; how

we share their triumphs or are touched by their despair, moved by the intensity of their hate or love, and often enduringly moulded by the power and pathos of their fame. If such could be the effect of an historical narrative, who, he mused, could say there is no animation in the genius of bygone days? or by what tape and footrule shall we limit the influence which might be exercised upon us were we brought directly within the active operation of some such overmastering force?

He drew on a smoking-jacket and slippers, for with such a medley filling his brain sleep could be courted only with the soothing aid of one more pipe of tobacco. The pipe—*donnerwetter*!—had been left downstairs, but he could fetch it thence in a moment. He opened his door and stepped noiselessly into the corridor. To his right a balcony overlooked the hall, at his left was a casement through which he beheld in the glimmering moonlight a dim outline of cypresses and hemlocks where strange fantastic shadows lurk. The clock downstairs played its little old-time tune, whose words recurred to Hector with new and startling meaning:—

"Und, und, wenn in die Ferne,
Mir, nur, dein Bild erscheint,
Dann, dann, wunsch Ich so gerne,
Dass uns die Liebe vereint!"

He became suddenly aware of a presence, and an overpowering consciousness smote him that some one besides himself was astir. He glided noiselessly to the balcony and peered over. There in the shimmering moonlight stood Doris, motionless, turned with outstretched arms towards the portrait of her ancestor, with rapt, uplifted face, spellbound and expectant. And as the last cadence of the clock chime lapsed into its regular ticking, Hector beheld a transformation in the painting which surpassed all the ghost stories he had ever known. The figure became detached from its wooden panel, and, floating down like a film, rested upon the floor and enfolded Doris in the embrace of its phantom arms. For several seconds Hector remained watching them, himself awestruck, chilled with a nameless terror, longing to shout, to stamp his feet, to curse the spectre—but in vain. He could no more move than he could doubt that what he beheld was the alchemist's pupil, ethereal as a myth, yet manifest as sin itself. He understood now, as never before, that there may be a supernatural meeting between some misty impersonation of a vanished century and the type of fresh and beautiful life. In silence, as it had descended, the phantom, after that intense and passionate salutation which the girl had come at the stroke of midnight to receive, melted from her and became fixed as before upon the panel.

Hector passed the remainder of that eventful night in feverish agitation. A hundred queries surged through his mind, and he awoke at length from a fitful doze with a sense of unutterable joy at seeing the sunshine peep through his lattice. When he had eaten the customary frugal breakfast he resolved to seek Wendelin and reveal his fateful discovery. But the pastor had been summoned to a bed-ridden cripple and would not be back till dinner, so he set himself to while away the morning as patiently as might be, and spend a couple of hours walking through the forest.

It was ten o'clock when he descended to the terrace and crossed the garden. The first person he met was Doris, radiantly happy, with a dainty basket on her arm, returning from her daily talk with the gardener who came to receive orders—such a quantity of vegetables to the cook, a dozen bunches of hothouse grapes for the table, a posy of flowers to the farmer's daughter who was ill. She nodded good-morning as blithely as though *revenants* were unknown, brushed back her

"The first person he met was Doris, radiantly happy

strawberry-blonde hair and said, "Come with me, cousin, and see the dairy. I have been to the kitchen, to the pantry, to the garden—my housekeeping is done: if you like we will try some duets presently—I have the latest English waltz, 'Bicycles built for two', and after dinner mamma intends to take you a drive up the valley"—and the girl looked at him with sparkling eyes, and laughed till she showed her white teeth.

The student, for all his metaphysics, was confounded. Was what he had seen a mere hallucination, or was it to be believed that a woman alive to-day could hold amorous communing with a man who disappeared from earth two hundred years ago! Could it be that our boasted philosophy has no profounder import than the whisper of a breaking wave? He was amazed at the girl's unconcern, and ended by wondering if she had grown so habituated to such escapades that dissimulation came naturally. It was on his lips to cry, "I surprised your midnight meeting!" but he walked beside her tongue tied and abashed, till as they crossed the lawn he awoke as from a nightmare to the delight of the early summer in the thrilling song of a bird. And he pointed out to her the grove on the other side of the river where, last October, he had gone with some Moselblumchen-loving Burschen, attended by a Waldhorn quartet, and waking the reverberant woods with their mirth—the German woods where, in summer, the lengthening twilight fills the forest with silhouettes of sprites and beckoning elves.

When at length, some hours later, he found an opportunity to unbosom himself to Wendelin, that worthy listened to his recital with unfeigned astonishment and alarm. But he presently declared himself immeasurably reassured by the girl's honest and care-free bearing that morning, and explained her seeming participation in what Hector insisted he had seen by an hypothesis of his own After inquiring minutely into every circumstance connected with the apparition—its duration, whether both figures were translucent, and whether any sound beyond the ticking of the clock had been audible, the wise man delivered himself as follows —

"My dear young friend, three days ago you and I were strangers, and here we are discussing an intimate event in the life of one whom I have watched from her childhood, and whose future is often in my thoughts. I know her to be a pure-minded girl, who could not commit the unmaidenly action you have erroneously attributed to her. Physically she may have been present, although not consciously so; which brings me back to the matters we discussed yesterday, and I can only say again that there is no telling to what morbid vagaries her prepossessions may have led It is no news to learn that she is in some way dominated by that accursed picture, but what you beheld was an unconscious aspiration after an imagined type, and nothing more."

Hector listened incredulously, and remained for some moments plunged in abstraction. "Is there no way," he queried at length, "in which we can break Racoczy's power for mischief?"

"There are two ways," replied Wendelin, rubbing his hand reflectively over his short grey hair, and rightly thinking within himself that his companion did not relish the prospect of a renewal of the spectral kissing scene "We must either possess ourselves of the ring which is his talisman, or else, at his next descent from the panel, we must intercept his return to it, which will leave him in a pretty predicament. The first expedient being apparently impossible, we must address ourselves heart and soul to the second."

"You mean that we must watch to-night from some dark corner?"

"Precisely, and the instant the phantom leaves the wall I engage to prevent its return by a process which is infallible, and consequently needs no explanation.

But this much is certain, that in the morning the picture will be an empty background!"

They were a merry party that evening at supper; and a substantial Teutonic supper it was—cold meats, Russian salad, devilled kidneys, rabbit pie and pickled goose, washed down with either beer or Rüdesheimer, and followed by custards, stewed preserves and savoury relishes tempered by small glasses of Kirschwasser or Cognac. After the repast they made music and told stories, and Doris showed her last sketches of the Neckarthal and the Rheingau, till Hector thought her more interesting than any of the nymphs that haunt those favoured localities, and became furiously jealous of Racoczy.

When half-past eleven struck, lights had been extinguished, and the moonbeams slanting through heraldic arms inlaid upon the window-panes, cast their opalescent tints upon the hall floor. Hector and Pastor Wendelin, hidden in a recess, sat side by side. The student had armed himself with a stout cudgel, and the priest had placed at his own feet some object of doubtful form concerning which he was obstinately reticent. Both watchers felt nervous at the prospect of the coming encounter. So redoubtable a trooper in the flesh might prove a tartar in the spirit, and whoever has experienced the mental will-o'-the-wisps that bewilder and perplex us, as though some demon dogged our steps, may have known the fatalities and sudden takings off and unaccountable unhingings of the brain that can proceed only from some sinister interposition. At a quarter before midnight all was silent save for the ticking clock: midnight struck, and the musical chime played its brief refrain . . . a quarter past twelve . . half-past twelve . . . still nothing.

Until presently Hector became aware of an imperative presence standing close beside him and pointing to a shining mirage which unfolded its lengthening vista. Before him opened the street of a mediæval town at midday, with quaint, peaked roofs and arches and painted signs and busy groups, and through the midst a marching column of *Lansknechts* in parti-coloured doublets and breeches, some helmeted and others wearing caps and plumes. Above the serried ranks sloped pikes and musquetoons and silken battle-flags, bright in the streaming sunshine; and at the head rode Racoczy, resplendent in crimson cape and glistening armour, and in the market-place a group of handsome girls, who, to the beholder's imagination, seemed the frail ones whom Racoczy in all his eventful life had allured and won, stood statuesquely motionless, looking with passionate wistfulness at the stately figure which, for remembrance' sake, gallantly kissed its gloved hand to them as the long files passed on and the blare of their martial music died away.

The scene changed to a lofty room whose walls were filled with books and astronomical charts and chemical retorts, and at a table sat Racoczy, and before him in gown and berretta stood a swarthy ascetic, whom the student surmised to be Almodoro; and amid the odorous smoke of burning philters and with gestures of tremendous incantation the alchemist bestowed upon his pupil a ring whose possession should irresistibly attract and compel love in all ages and in every clime, so long as gentle hearts beat responsive to the magic of persuasive words.

Again the vision faded, and now Hector beheld, as on the previous night, the image of Doris standing alone and Racoczy gliding towards her. From his finger the spectre drew a ring, and the agonised youth divined that if it were placed upon the hand of the girl whose soul an ideal had fascinated she would never free herself from its enchantment. He was conscious of touching a secret that, if completely grasped, might reveal why so many shocks and griefs enter into the

"The scene changed to a lofty room, whose shelves were filled with books."

substance of our daily bread. He comprehended that, even as the spirits of those departed whom we have intimately known may return to whisper in our reveries, so there is a mystical power which exerts upon our lives an impetus for good or evil; and knew, as though it had been thundered in his ear, that whoever placed that potent ring upon the hand of Doris would guide her life.

But in that instant the spectre turned and confronted Hector as one lover in a passionate quarrel turns upon his rival. The outstretched hand grasped no weapon, yet the young man knew that for him its fateful touch was death. The phantom eyed him with the menace of a supreme malignity, as it drew furtively

near, when at last Hector broke from the spell which held him, and with blood surging through his brain sprang gasping to his feet. "THE RING! THE RING!" he shouted frantically, striving to clutch the figure, which at the words melted into empty air, leaving before him only Pastor Wendelin stumbling over the mysterious object at his feet, which was neither more nor less than a bowl of holy water.

"What is it?" cried the priest, as his companion sprang forward and madly dashed his cudgel against the portrait of Racoczy. They lighted a candle, and perceived that they were too late to prevent the spectre's return to the panel, for there he was before them on its polished surface, austere, reposeful, self-contained. But an extraordinary thing had happened. When Hector's cudgel struck the picture, it dislodged an object imperfectly fastened at the back of the wood, whence it fell to his feet. It was an antique ring, which he snatched and thrust into his pocket, for there was no time now for examination, since with their scufflings and outcries they had aroused the household.

The next morning Hector and Wendelin bitterly reproached each other with having fallen asleep in presence of the enemy. The one had seen a vision which the other pooh-poohed as a silly dream, and Hector declared that if the priest had seen nothing it must be because he was napping at his post. From this they passed to a minute and eager scrutiny of the ring. It was of Greek workmanship, a hoop of gold encircling an onyx intaglio, representing a sitting and smiling cupid playfully crushing in his hands a cluster of those perennial roses wherewith lovers wreathe their delightful pangs. Was this the long-lost ring referred to in Almodoro's narrative of journeyings and *séances*—the ring of many loves that upon his authority had fixed itself upon the hand of Galatea, had been given by Cleopatra to Marc Antony, had been exchanged the night before Philippi as a token of faith between Brutus and Cassius, had been produced at the trial of a sinning Vestal as the conclusive proof of her guilt, and had been cast by Doge Morosini into the Adriatic at the yearly espousal of Venice with the sea?

Who had secreted it in its odd hiding-place unless Racoczy himself when he felt the end both of love and life? There was much discussion upon this and other puzzling doubts; nor was their interest lessened on observing that the mark or ring on Racoczy's hand in the painting had disappeared. Hector's suggestion that it might have been but a discoloration which the blow of his cudgel effaced, was rejected by the learned Wendelin, to whom it was clear that Racoczy by that lucky stroke had been deprived of his talisman, wherein lay his familiar spirit; and he urged his companion to take it away with him from Villa Venedig and cast it once more to the bottom of the sea.

"It is not mine to keep, still less to destroy," answered the student. "I must immediately deliver it to the Countess."

To this the priest urged strenuous objections, declaring the ring to be a curse upon the house, which it was now in their power to remove, and hinting that if restored to the phantom there would be no saying to what dangerous degree the unhallowed wooing of Doris might be carried, till the young man's purpose was shaken and he agreed to postpone its restitution.

And so, when three days later he took his leave in the ceremonious fashion of German politeness, with hearty handshakings and farewells and good wishes, the ring was fastened out of sight upon his watchchain, where it was to remain many months. He was about to enter upon the customary *Wanderjahr* of German students, in the course whereof it became remarkable how often his thoughts reverted to Villa Venedig and how frequently a remembrance of Doris flitted before him. Whithersoever he went the mystery of the ring preoccupied him,

accenting his reveries by day and lurking in his dreams at night. So haunted were his journeyings by the fervour of the imagery it suggested, that dawn and twilight breathed the same message of tremendous tidings of joy and pathos, and always with the same eloquent silence.

He had not been back many days at his own home before these magnetic attractions impelled him to Villa Venedig—only for the day. His arrival was unexpected, for he meant merely to restore the ring—to Doris. It happened to be a beautiful afternoon, and he walked with her to the edge of the terrace and down the Philosopher's Walk—to look at the view. There is an arbour covered with grape-vines at the end of that dim promenade, from which one beholds the glistening river and the distant hills bathed in yellow sunshine as radiant as their golden wine. And shall young eyes watch the sunset fade upon the crests of distant hills—those distant hills where careless chance and thoughtful destiny may meet—and not think of immortality—or of how little immortality would mean without love!

There are words which, once spoken, ring in the memory to the end of life, and may perhaps be written upon the heart in heaven. For a diffident man, expressing himself with no small embarrassment, Hector suddenly became possessed of a supreme inspiration whereby, on a lover's lips, the dross of silver speech was rendered perfect, and carried such conviction to the listening Doris as to seem purer even than the gold of silence. This, too, may have been some magic of the ring, which he placed upon her hand unresisted.

A month later, in October, at the season of reddening leaves, when through the orchards and the cornfields the poetry of autumn fills the earth with an incantation not spoken, but which all the world can hear, Hector and Doris were married.

There was feasting that day at Villa Venedig, and music and dancing on the terrace, and although many came and ate and drank as though they feared never to eat or drink again, the good cheer was not exhausted.

General von Katzengeschrei, the Countess's uncle, and a veteran of Sedan, gave the bride away, and proposed her health and the bridegroom's in sonorous phrases each as involved as a sailor's knot and none shorter than St. Basil's homilies. Then Pastor Wendelin, who had an amiable mania for seeing people married, and who was so overjoyed that the tears stood in his eyes, returned thanks for them; and when he resumed his seat the guests cheered, and, emptying their glasses, called upon the bridegroom to rise, were it only to say a word.

Doubtless Hector too might have made a cheery speech, for he felt happy enough to say many pleasant things, had not his gaze rested at that critical moment upon the portrait of Rakoczy. It struck him with a guilty feeling that he was sitting in the old Ritter's hall, his feet upon the pavement the other's mailed steps had trodden, having stolen his talisman and now about to bear away thence the girl who was that ancient soldier's last descendant, and in whose fate her ancestor had shown so ardent an interest. The face in the picture gave no sign under his scrutiny, but gazed fixedly upon him as one who looks wistfully from spheres and across memories whose import is only to be guessed. Hector rose, but his voice faltered in that moment of emotion, and while all saw that he looked steadfastly at the phantom portrait, only those nearest caught the whispered words, "God rest his soul!"

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.

"WHEN I was living next door to Professor Van Wagener, in New Berlinopolisville, said the Colonel, he sent for me one morning, and asked me if I would sleep in his house for two or three nights. You see, Mrs Van Wagener had been spending the winter in St. Louis, and the Professor wanted to go and fetch her home. The burglar industry in our town had been pretty brisk during the winter, and the Professor judged that it would not be quite safe to leave the house with nobody in it except the servants. Of course I had no objection to doing as my old friend wished, and so, about four o'clock in the afternoon, I saw the Professor safely in his train at the railway station, and then walked up to his house and took possession of it.

Van Wagener had been busy with a new invention that winter, but for a wonder he had not told me anything about it. However, as he went about with his fingers wrapped up in rags, and his clothes were developing new grease spots every day, I knew by the symptoms that some new invention was in progress. He said to me, when I put him in the train, that he had a little surprise waiting for me at the house, which he rather thought would please me, but he did not go into any details about it. He might have meant that his surprise was a dinner that a Christian could eat which, considering that Van Wagener generally ordered his dinner himself, and gave the orders to a constitutionally drunken cook, would have been a first-class surprise; or he might have wished me to understand that for once he had invented something which was not a failure. However, I did not pay much attention to what he said, for I had learned by experience that the less attention you pay to scientific men the better will be your chances of keeping clear of mischief.

I had my dinner all alone in Van Wagener's dining-room that night, and there wasn't anything in the least surprising about it. It began with roast chicken that wasn't cooked through, and then it came to a sudden end with soup, made of some unearthly sort of chemical composition that Van Wagener had invented, and that according to him contained more nourishment to the cubic foot than any other substance ever eaten either by a human being or a man of science. That was just about the sort of dinner that Van Wagener usually gave me when his wife was away, and it made me admire the toughness of the man who had eaten such dinners for nearly four months without dying of starvation and poison combined.

I didn't eat very much, and what I did eat didn't seem to reconcile itself to

its situation. So, after smoking a great deal more than was good for me, I locked up the house and went to bed. It was a bitter cold night, and I could not see that there was any fire in my bedroom, though the room was fairly warm. Now, I don't care to sleep in a warm room, and in point of fact I always sleep with the window open, no matter how cold the weather may be; but I never could reconcile myself to the idea of getting into a cold bed. I knew that Van Wagener had a prejudice against warming-pans, for I had once heard him denounce them as grossly unscientific, but I wished all the same that I had brought my warming-pan with me, so that I could have taken a little of the chill off the sheets.

When I finally got into bed I was surprised to find that it was beautifully warm. This was a pleasant surprise, though I did not at the time connect it with the Professor's remark about the surprise that he had prepared for me. I supposed that the cook had accidentally been betrayed into a little fit of sobriety, and had fished out a warming-pan from the Professor's garret, and made my bed comfortable. The warmth made me sleepy, and while I was still thinking of the surprising fact that a man could actually be comfortable in Van Wagener's house—that is, provided Van Wagener himself was out of it, and no inventions were in progress—I fell sound asleep.

I woke up some time in the middle of the night feeling as if I had been sleeping in the stokehole of an Indian steamer in July, under a pile of heavy tarpaulins. I never remember to have felt so hot in the whole course of my life as I felt that night. I was simply bathed in perspiration, and the sheets felt hot to the touch. As I have said, there was no fire in the room, and I could see by the moonlight that the window was wide open, and that the snow had drifted into the room during the night. It was therefore clear enough to my mind that I was in a tremendous fever, and that in all probability Van Wagener's patent soup that I had eaten at dinner had poisoned me.

There was nobody in the house except the cook and the chambermaid, both of whom would have refused to go out in the middle of a cold winter's night in search of a doctor. So I just made up my mind to wait till morning, and then, if I should happen to be alive, to send for the nearest doctor and find out what my chances might be.

I needn't say that there was no more sleep for me. As far as I could judge, my temperature was about a hundred and five, though it seemed to be about a hundred and fifty. I longed to throw off the bed-clothes and to get up and roll in the snow that was sprinkled on the floor under the window, but I did not dare to take such liberties with my fever. What I dreaded more than anything else was that when the doctor should arrive he would find me delirious. I worked hard that night to keep my mind in training, by thinking out sums in arithmetic without a slate, and trying to recollect all the different beds that I had slept in since I was a child. I managed to hold on to my reason; and when daylight finally came, and I had made a servant understand that if she didn't fetch a doctor without any more delay there would be a corpse in the house before noon, I had the comfort of knowing that the doctor would not find a gibbering idiot in my bed.

My own family doctor was out of town, and his substitute came to see me. This was a young man who had just come to New Berlinopolisville, and had been a volunteer surgeon in the army. I didn't much like the look of him, and when he mentioned that he had been with the army on the plains I was more dissatisfied than ever. All an army surgeon knows, as a rule, is how to cut off a leg,

"'I'm just on the point of operating on him'" (p. 278).

or probe a bullet wound, and if, when you have an attack of diphtheria or brain fever, you call in an army surgeon, the chances are that he will amputate your leg, and probe the inside of your brain, before he has been in the house five minutes.

As it happened, this young fellow was more enterprising than most army men, and he had invented a remedy for chills and fever which he believed to be infallible. It was less trouble to give a patient this remedy than it was to perform a surgical operation, so that on the whole the young doctor wasn't what an insurance company would call extra-hazardous in a sick room. He listened to my symptoms, and felt my pulse, and told me that I had the worst attack of chills and fever that he had ever met. I told him about the dinner I had eaten the night before, and my suspicions that it might have poisoned me, but he wouldn't hear of it. "You've got chills and fever, and nothing else," he said; "and mighty lucky you are to have it. I never yet saw a case of chills and fever that I couldn't collar and throw in three rounds. You take my remedy three times, and you'll feel as cool as if you were searching for the North Pole."

Well, I took his remedy; and mighty unpleasant it was, but it didn't seem to catch on to the disease. I wasn't a bit cooler when the doctor came to see me that evening than I had been when he called in the morning, and I had taken his medicine four times instead of three. He was a very free-spoken young man for a doctor, and he didn't hesitate to say that he'd be everlasting darned if he could understand why his remedy hadn't got its work in. So far as he and I could judge, my fever was as high as ever; but when the doctor tested me with his thermometer, which he had forgotten to do in the morning, he found that my temperature was only about two-tenths higher than it ought to have been. This filled him with astonishment, and he told me that I was one of the most interesting and important cases that he had ever known, and that before he and the fever should get through with me, I could count upon rendering invaluable service to science.

It being very clear that the doctor's great remedy for chills and fever wouldn't work in my case, he decided to try quinine, and as a starter he made me take thirty grains. Now, I can take about as much quinine as any man living, having been brought up in a region where every inhabitant lays in his supply of quinine by the hundredweight. But when the doctor had given me the third dose of thirty grains within six hours, I told him that if it was all the same to him I would prefer the fever. Seeing that I was obstinate, he said that there was so much excitement in my nervous system that he would calm it down with a little assafœtida and thereupon he began to shovel that cheerful drug into me. He sent an Irishman to sit up with me that night, and to give me my medicine regularly, which the man did until I could stand it no longer. I sent out for two bottles of whisky, and by the time the Irishman had finished them he had forgotten all about my medicine, and I managed to get a few moments of quiet sleep.

The doctor was on hand bright and early the next morning, and he didn't seem at all discouraged when he found that I was as hot as ever. He told me that, having exhausted the resources of science so far as medicines were concerned, he should now fall back on surgery, and that he hadn't the least doubt that he could cure me with a single operation. When I asked him what the operation was, he said, as I expected he would, that he intended to amputate my left leg at the knee-joint. He assured me that before the invention of his great anti-chills and fever remedy, which had so unaccountably failed to work in my case, he had always treated bad cases of malarial fever in the army by amputation of either the right or left leg, and that he had hardly ever failed to be completely successful. I had now been suffering from my remarkable fever for nearly forty-eight hours, and I was so annoyed about it that I would have endured almost any operation that would have been certain of curing me. Nevertheless, I had a prejudice against losing a leg, and I hadn't the slightest belief that it would do me any good, so I told the doctor that I must respectfully decline to undergo the operation. He argued the matter for some time, and finally he took the ground that I was delirious and unfit to have any opinion whatever concerning my own case. "My dear Colonel," he said, "you're a first-class man when you are in your senses, but just now you are delirious, and I'm not going to allow any lunatic, temporary or permanent, to dictate to me. It's my duty as a medical man to take off your leg, and it's coming off, no matter what you think or wish about the matter."

I saw he was determined, and I cast a hasty glance round the room, to see if there was such a thing as a revolver handy. Of course there wasn't. Van Wagener kept his house full of scientific apparatus, but he had no idea of keeping anything really useful about him. I knew I was too weak to grapple with the doctor, and when I saw him get out his instruments I felt that my chances of holding on to my leg were mighty slim.

"Doctor," said I, "if you have made up your mind to amputate my leg, I wish you would have the goodness to explain to me how the operation can possibly be a remedy for chills and fever." I needn't say that I didn't have the least curiosity to know what the doctor's views were; but, so far as I could see, my only chance was to delay the operation, in the hope that somebody would come to my assistance.

"It's irregular," said the doctor, "for a physician to explain the action of his remedies to a patient. However, I will make an exception in your case, Colonel. The way of it is this. Amputating a leg reduces the fever, because it reduces the quantity of blood in the patient's veins. Then, again, the shock to the nervous system makes the disease feel sort of discouraged and weak, and in nine cases out

"'I really meant to make you comfortable'" (p. 279)

of ten it hasn't force enough to stand up against a good dose of quinine. You just trust to me. I've cut off seven hundred and twenty-two legs in my time, and you can just bet your bottom dollar that I know my business."

By this time the doctor had got everything in readiness, and he came towards the bed with the intention of choosing out the more attractive leg to operate on. Just at that moment the door opened, and Van Wagener came into the room. I was never so glad to see a man in my life as I was to see the Professor.

"What's all this, Colonel?" said he. "They tell me you have a fever."

"A very bad case of typho malarial fever," said the doctor. "I'm just on the point of operating on him."

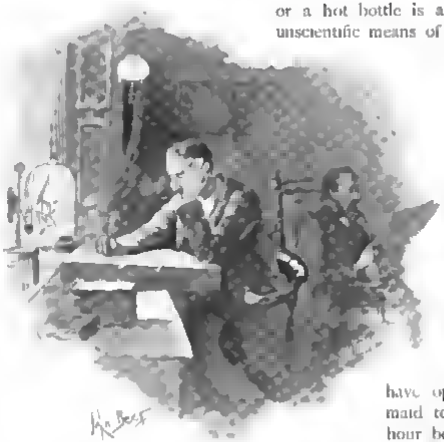
"He's going to cut my leg off," I cried. "For Heaven's sake, Van Wagener, turn the brute out of the room."

The Professor didn't wait to hear any explanations. He knew me, and he was ready to take my word against all the doctors in Illinois. He bundled the doctor out of the room in no time, and then he took hold of my hand and asked me to tell him all my symptoms.

I had just begun to tell him about the sudden and mysterious fever that had attacked me, when he jumped up, and, going to the head of the bed, exclaimed, "I thought so! How awfully careless I have been!" Then he came back to me, and said, "It's all right, my dear Colonel. You haven't had the least particle of fever. I accidentally left my new bed-warming apparatus in action, and that is what has been heating you for the last two days. I give you my word that in ten minutes you will be as cool and comfortable as you ever were in your life."

"Do you mind telling me what you are talking about?" I asked. "What do you mean by your bed-warming apparatus?"

"What I mean is this," he replied, "as I have often told you, a warming-pan



"I sent him word that I would call on him with my gun."

or a hot bottle is a miserably inadequate and unscientific means of warming a bed. Now, my new bed warming apparatus is both effectual, as you know by experience, and thoroughly scientific. About three inches below the wire mattress on which you are lying is a sort of gas stove, that occupies the whole width of the bed, and is furnished with twenty-one small gas jets. When these are lighted the bed is thoroughly warmed, no matter how cold the weather may be, or how many windows you may have open. I told the chamber maid to light up the gas half an hour before you went to bed, and she didn't have sense enough to turn it off again. The consequence is that the gas stove has been heating your bed up to a temperature of about 130° Fahrenheit ever since you got into it. The only wonder is that everything about the bed did not become dry enough and hot enough to take fire. It was all my fault, for I ought to have given the girl particular directions to turn out the gas; but I was naturally a little disturbed in my mind, for I was expecting to meet Mrs. Van Wagener in the course of a few hours, and I knew she would ask me if the house was clean and in good order; and that sort of thing always——"

"I suppose you meant this scientific bed warming apparatus of yours as a pleasant surprise for me?" I said, interrupting my friend in his rather long explanation.

"Precisely so," replied the Professor eagerly. "I really meant to make you comfortable, and I apologise most sincerely for the discomfort you have undergone."

"Considering that you happened to come back in time to save my leg, I will forgive you," I said. "But, Professor! the next time I come to spend a night in your house, I'm going to bring my own dinner, my own bed, and a private policeman to stand guard over me. Now you just get me a bottle of the best Kentucky tonic—Scotch will do if you haven't any Kentucky—and I'll get up and shoot that doctor."

"I didn't shoot him after all," remarked the Colonel, after a short pause. "I sent him word that I would call on him with my gun, and amputate his leg with a 44 calibre bullet. But he didn't wait for me: he had a sudden call to California, and I never heard of him from that day to this."

W. L. ALDEN.

THERE was once a King who was so fond of hunting that all the rabbits in his kingdom were born with their hearts in their mouths. The King would have been extremely surprised to hear this, for, of course, he never hunted anything so small as a rabbit, but rabbits are foolish enough for anything, as all the world knows, and it is certain that the rabbits of the King's forest would never have had a happy moment to this day, if the Green Enchantress had not suddenly taken it into her head to try and bewitch the King.

Now, the Green Enchantress was very beautiful indeed. She sat all day long at the foot of an old lime tree in the royal forest, and she was dressed all in green, and she had small white hands and great black eyes and quantities and quantities of dark red hair. Every animal in the forest, from the largest wild boar down to the smallest baby-rabbit, was a friend of hers, and it made her dreadfully unhappy when she saw them being killed just to amuse the King. So it was no wonder that she made up her mind, at last, to try and bewitch him; and the first time she tried was on a fine summer evening, when the royal party was riding home from the hunt.

It had been an exceedingly dull hunt that day, for the King had found nothing whatever to kill, and this made him so exceedingly irritable that his followers took care to keep a good way behind him as they rode along. That was how it happened that the King was riding quite alone, when a voice suddenly called out to him from the side of the road.

"Good-evening, King," said the voice. "Have you had good sport to-day?"

The King pulled up his horse and looked round, and when he saw a wonderful-looking girl all dressed in green, sitting at the foot of an old lime tree, he did not know quite what to say. He knew very little about girls, for he had spent all his life in killing things, but he had a sort of idea that the girl in green was not much like the princesses who came to court.

"I have had no sport at all," he said at last. "All the animals were hiding to-day."

"No doubt they were," said the Green Enchantress. "So would you be, if people came hunting you with great horrid spears and things!"

She was really laughing at him, but the King had no idea of it. He only looked at her more solemnly than before.

"What do you know about it?" he asked her.

"Perhaps I know more about this forest than you know about the whole of your kingdom," answered the Green Enchantress, and this time she laughed outright. But the King did not mind in the least.

"Perhaps you do," he said simply. "I never pretended to know much. I do not even know why you are laughing. Will you tell me?"

"I am laughing because you know so little," she answered mysteriously, "and because there is so much I could tell you if it pleased me."

"I have no doubt you could," replied the King. "Will it please you to tell me now?"

"I don't feel inclined to tell you now," said the Green Enchantress.

"How strange!" exclaimed the King. "If I had anything to tell, I should tell it at once; but then, I am not a girl. When will you tell me?"

"Next time you come," laughed the girl in green.

"Next time?" said the King. "Why should I come twice when once would do?"

She did not trouble to answer that at all; and when the King looked again at the old lime tree, the girl in green had completely disappeared.

"Is there a witch in the forest?" he asked, when his followers came riding up to him.

"There is the Green Enchantress, your Majesty," answered the chief huntsman. "I have never seen her, but they say she is the most beautiful woman in the whole world."

"Indeed!" said the King in surprise; and he went home and spent the whole of the evening in trying to remember what the girl in green had looked like. He had quite forgotten, however; so the very next morning he stole out of the palace long before any one was awake, and walked as fast as he could in the direction of the old lime tree. The wild boars and the other animals were so surprised to see him there so early in the day that they followed him in twos and threes to see what he was going to do, while as for the King, he strode on over the dewy grass and never noticed them at all. And all the while the bracken on either side of him was alive with trembling little rabbits, all squeaking to one another, with their hearts in their mouths,—"We shall certainly be killed if the King sees us!"

At last he came to the old lime tree at the side of the road, and there sat the wonderful girl all dressed in green, with her dark red hair falling round her down to the ground. The King would have taken off his crown to her, if he had not come out without it; but he made her a low bow instead, and the Green Enchantress began to laugh.

"Dear me!" she said, "why have you come back again?"

"They told me you were the most beautiful woman in the world, so I came to see if it was true," said the King.

"And now you are here, do you think it is true?" asked the girl in green.

"I suppose so," said the King, doubtfully; "but I don't know much about girls. If you were a wild boar, now, or——"

"But I'm not a wild boar!" cried the Green Enchantress, and she was so angry at being compared to a wild boar that she promptly threw a spell over the King and tried to turn *him* into a wild boar. But the King went on being a king, just the same as before, and he had no idea that he was expected to be a wild boar at that very moment.

"When are you going to tell me all the things you know?" he asked her, smiling

"I have forgotten what there was to tell," said the Green Enchantress, sulkily; and she got up and walked away among the trees The King wondered what he had done to offend her, and he tried hard to remember whether he had ever offended any of the princesses who came to court; but as none of the princesses who came to court ever thought of showing their feelings, he would not have known if he had.

Meanwhile the Green Enchantress was feeling very cross indeed "What is the use of being an enchantress if people refuse to be enchanted?" she grumbled; and she ran off as fast as she could to find her godfather, the magician Smilax, for nothing ever put her into such a good temper as a visit to her godfather Now, Smilax was the most amiable magician the world has ever contained, and he lived in an ordinary little cottage with a green door and a white doorstep and a red chimney-pot, and he did not look like a magician at all All the same, Smilax was by no means a stupid magician, as the rest of the story will show

"She got up and walked away among the trees."

"What is the matter?" he asked, when his godchild ran in at the door "Do you want me to teach you a new spell?"

"No, indeed!" cried the Green Enchantress "I am tired of spells; I want something much better."

"Well, well," said the kind old magician, "let us hear what it is all about, and then we'll see what we can do"

It was impossible to go on being cross when any one was as good-tempered as Smilax, so his godchild climbed at once on to the arm of his chair and sat there with her little white feet dangling, while she told him all about the King who would not turn into a wild boar "Is it not hard," pouted the Green Enchantress, "that I cannot bewitch the King?"

"Some kings are easier to bewitch than others," remarked the magician wisely. "Now, what is it you want me to do for you?"

"I want you to make me into a princess," said his godchild promptly "Then I can go to court and dance with the King Only think of it!" And she

pretended that the poker was the King and danced round the room with it, to show how she should behave when she got to court.

"That's easily done," said Smilax. "You shall go to court and dance with the King, if you like; and I will make you so fine a princess that the King will not be able to distinguish you from all the other princesses in the palace!"

"But I don't want to be like all the other princesses, godfather; I want to be a *real* princess," objected the Green Enchantress.

Smilax shook his head. "Then I cannot help you," he said. "Nobody can make a real princess—not even the Fairy Queen herself. Real princesses make themselves, and that is a very different matter."

"Shall I never go to court, then?" asked his godchild, with tears in her eyes.

"Of course you shall!" said Smilax. "Can you not go to court without being a princess? There is a back door to the palace as well as a front one, and any ordinary person can get in at the back door. But you must give up all your witchcraft the moment you set foot in the palace, for it is impossible to be an ordinary person and a bewitching one at the same moment."

"I don't mind that," said his godchild. "If I cannot bewitch the King I do not want to be an enchantress any more. I will go to the palace this very minute!"

And so she did, and that was how it came about that there was a new scullery-maid at the palace; and, one fine morning, the King met her all among the vegetables, as he took his stroll in the garden after breakfast. It is extremely probable that the King would not have noticed her at all if she had not happened to be wearing a bright green handkerchief tied over her dark red hair, but he felt sure that he had seen that bright green and that dark red somewhere before, so he stopped and looked at her.

"What are you doing?" he asked her, with a smile.

"I am picking beans for the King's dinner," answered the little scullery-maid.

"How extremely kind of you!" exclaimed the King, who had always supposed that the beans for his dinner picked themselves. "Will you let me look at them?"

She held out her basket, and the King peeped inside, and found it full of bright scarlet flowers.

"Are those beans?" asked the King in wonderment, and he thought he had never seen anything so charming before.

"I *hope* so," said the little scullery-maid with an anxious sigh, for she knew no more about it than the King, and was dreadfully afraid of being scolded for picking the wrong thing. Indeed, she had hardly finished speaking when the angry voice of the chief cook called her from the back door, and away she scampered down the garden path.

Every one noticed how absent-minded the King was at dinner, that day. He talked even less than usual, and when the fifteenth course came round, he turned reproachfully to the Prime Minister.

"I thought I was going to have beans for dinner," observed the King in a disappointed tone.

"Your Majesty has just helped himself to beans," said the Prime Minister, when he had recovered from his surprise at the King's remark.

"What?" exclaimed the King, looking at his plate. "Are these the beautiful scarlet beans that grow in my kitchen-garden? Impossible!"

"They turn green when they are cooked, your Majesty," said the Prime Minister, who had never seen a bean growing in his life but could not possibly have owned such a thing before the court.

"Then let me have my beans before they are cooked, in future," said the King; and the Prime Minister hastily made a note of it on his clean cuff.

There was a magnificent ball at the palace that evening, and the King had ninety-nine delightful princesses to dance with, but none of them had dark red hair, and when he had finished dancing with the ninety-ninth he once more turned reproachfully to the Prime Minister.

"Where is the hundredth Princess?" he demanded impatiently.

The Prime Minister knew no more about the hundredth Princess than he had known about beans, and he wished he had gone to bed instead of coming to the court ball to be worried by the King's questions.

"I have never heard of the hundredth Princess, your Majesty," he said wearily. "Would it please your Majesty to tell me what she is like?"

"I never heard of her myself until this morning," said the King. "She has wonderful dark red hair, and she is so sweet and so kind that she actually picks the vegetables for my dinner!"

The Prime Minister was so relieved at not being put into a dungeon that he positively yawned in the King's presence; and the King, for the first time in his life, noticed that he looked tired and sent him home to bed, which was certainly a much nicer place to send him to than a dungeon. And as for the Prime Minister, he went on speaking the truth to the end of his days.

The next morning, the King hastened into his garden the moment he had swallowed his breakfast. The chief huntsman met him just as he was leaving the palace, and asked him what time it would please him to start for the hunt.

"Hunt?" cried the King impatiently. "What hunt? I am going to pick the vegetables for my dinner, and that is ever so much more important!" And he ran down the steps and across the lawn, as never a King ran before.

The little scullery-maid was wandering among the gooseberry bushes with a very disconsolate look on her face. "I am looking for sage to stuff the King's ducks with," she said, when the King came hurrying towards her; "but I don't know a bit what it is like, and how can I be expected to pick things when I don't know what to pick?"

"Do not look so distressed," said the King, for her eyes were full of tears. "I am the King, and I do not mind whether my ducks are stuffed or not."

"Ah, but the chief cook does," said the little scullery-maid, who, of course, had known all the while that he was the King. "The chief cook will beat me if I do not fill my basket with sage. Look! this is where he beat me yesterday for bringing the wrong beans."

She rolled up her sleeve and showed him a tiny black speck on her dainty white arm. To be sure, it was not much of a bruise, but when one has been an enchantress all one's life it is a little hard to be beaten for not knowing enough. The King was quite overcome with distress, and he stooped and kissed the little black mark tenderly; and that, as every one knows, is the only way to cure a bruise.

"Come with me," he said, "and I will help you to find some sage. Then the King's ducks will be stuffed, and the chief cook will not be able to beat you."

So the King and the scullery-maid wandered all over the kitchen-garden and hunted for sage. And the King knew just as much about it as the scullery-maid, and the scullery-maid knew as much as the King, and that was just exactly nothing at all; so there is no doubt that the King's ducks would never have got stuffed that day, if the pair of them had not suddenly stumbled upon a bush of rosemary.

"She rolled up her sleeve and showed him a tiny black speck on her dainty white arm."

"Does it not smell sweet?" exclaimed the little scullery-maid, and she picked a whole handful of it and gave it to the King.

"Surely," cried the King, "anything so charming as this must be the very thing we are looking for!"

The angry voice of the chief cook sounded once more from the back door, so they did not stop to think any more about it but filled the basket with rosemary as fast as they could; and then away scampered the little scullery-maid down the path, while the King stood and watched the little curls of dark red hair that fluttered in the breeze.

The chief cook was far too grand a person to stuff the King's ducks, so he left it to the little scullery-maid; and the result was that the King's ducks were stuffed with rosemary. There were only two people in the palace who enjoyed their dinner that day: one was the King, who sat at the head of the royal table and had three helpings of roast duck; and the other was the little scullery-maid, who sat on the back doorstep and ate the scrapings of all the plates out of a big brown bowl. As for the courtiers, they never forgot that dinner as long as they lived; but this was not surprising, for ducks that are stuffed with rosemary are surely ducks to be remembered.

After that, the courtiers had to eat a good many nasty things for dinner. Every day the chief cook sent the little scullery-maid into the garden to pick something for the King's dinner, and every day the King came and helped her to find it; and although they never found the right thing, and although it was generally very nasty, the King always ate three helpings of it, and that was all that mattered to the chief cook. To be sure, it was a lot of trouble to take, just to please the chief cook, and it would have been far simpler to have cut off his head then and there; but neither the King nor the scullery-maid thought of that. After all, it was much nicer to go on meeting each other among the gooseberry bushes, and it certainly saved the expense of an executioner.

Before long people began to wonder what had come over the King. He never went near the royal forest. The chief huntsman and all the other huntsmen had never been so dull in their lives; but the wild boars and all the other animals were as happy as the day was

The King a scullery-maid.

long. Even the rabbits began to pop up their heads above the bracken, and were quite amazed when they found that no one was waiting to kill them. "Truly," they squeaked to one another, "the Green Enchantress must have bewitched the King after all!" And perhaps they were not far wrong.

Now, the same thing cannot go on for ever, and one morning, when the King hastened out into the garden as usual, the scullery-maid saw at once that he had something important to say.

"There is to be a ball to-morrow," he told her. "The Prime Minister says so! And there will be ninety-nine princesses there besides yourself."

The little scullery-maid shook her head. "I shall not be there," she said. "I am only a scullery-maid; and no one, not even the Fairy Queen, can make me into a real princess."

"You are the hundredth princess," declared the King; "and no one, not even the Fairy Queen, can make you into a scullery-maid."

"The ninety-nine other princesses have never picked the vegetables for the King's dinner," sighed the little scullery-maid.

"Into the room ran the little scullery-maid and after her the chief cook, the Prime Minister, the chief huntsman, and the Lord High Executioner."

"They would never do anything half so sweet or so kind," said the King.

"The ninety-nine other princesses," continued the little scullery-maid, looking down at her crumpled print gown, "have never worn such an old frock as mine!"

"Nor have they ever looked half so beautiful or so charming," said the King.

The angry voice of the chief cook sounded loudly from the back door, and the little scullery-maid turned to run down the path as usual. But, this time, the King caught her by the hand and held her back.

"Will you come to the ball and dance with me?" he asked coaxingly.

She looked very sad. "I am not a real princess, you see," she sighed.

The angry voice of the chief cook sounded louder than before, and she pulled away her hand and escaped down the path.

"Will you come to the ball?" the King shouted after her.

"Perhaps!" laughed the little scullery-maid over her shoulder, and the next moment she was out of sight. It was truly a strange way of accepting an invitation to the King's ball; but then, she was the hundredth princess, and perhaps that made all the difference.

It was a most magnificent ball; and the hundredth princess *did* come to it. For, just as the King finished dancing with the last of the ninety-nine princesses, a great hubbub was heard in the hall outside, and into the room ran the little scullery-maid, and after her ran the chief cook with the soup ladle in his hand, and after them both came the Prime Minister and the chief huntsman, and the

Lord High Executioner and all the other people who were in the hall because they did not know how to dance.

"Who are you?" cried the ninety-nine princesses, as the little scullery-maid stood in front of them, all in her crumpled print gown, with her green handkerchief tied over her head.

"Who are you?" echoed all the courtiers and all the pages who happened to be there.

"She is nothing but a scullery-maid," cried the chief cook, brandishing his soup-ladle.

"She is the Green Enchantress," gasped the chief huntsman.

"You are all talking rubbish," said the Prime Minister, who had certainly lost some of his manners since he took to speaking the truth. "Any one can see she is the hundredth princess!"

But it was the King who really settled the matter.

"She is the Queen, of course," he said gently, and came and took her by the hand. And no one thought of contradicting him, for, although real princesses have to make themselves, it is quite certain that any king can make a queen.

When the ninety-nine princesses saw how charming the little Queen was, they crowded round her with one accord and gave her ninety-nine kisses. So they were real princesses after all! "Tell us," they begged her afterwards, "are you really the Green Enchantress?"

"Oh no," she said; "I gave up being an enchantress when I found I could not bewitch the King."

"Why did you want to bewitch me, dearest?" asked the King in amazement.

"Because you were so fond of killing things," she said.

"Then I will never kill anything again as long as I live!" vowed the King.

And that is the end of the story, for when the little rabbits heard that the King had given up hunting, they all gave a great gulp and swallowed their hearts. And after that, there was no one in the kingdom who was not happy, for everybody's heart was in the right place.

EVELYN SHARP.

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THE MER-BABY'S CRADLING.

(DEDICATED TO MRS H. M. STANLEY)

SLEEP, little mer-baby, down in the blue—
Mother's here watching and singing for you;
Billows are cresting,
The rugged rocks breasting,
And mer-maidens dance the white foam-forest through

Sleep, little mer-
baby, cool is thy bed—
Red-rosy seaweed to pillow thy head.
Sleep till day's dawning,
Coral for awning,
Green plaited garlands for coverlet spread.

Sleep, pretty mer-babe, in each tiny hand
Pearl-beads and gems from an Orient strand ;
Shells iridescent
Pave the bay's crescent
Out on the slopes where no human feet stand.

Sleep, little mer-baby, mother's own pride!
Soon shalt thou have a wild dolphin to ride,
Leaping and striving,
And rising and diving,
Fast through the surf with the wind and the tide.

BLANCHE LINDSAY.

A HAUNTED ISLAND.

THE following events occurred on a small island of isolated position in a large Canadian lake, to whose cool waters the wealthy inhabitants of Montreal and Toronto flee for rest and recreation in the hot months. It is only to be regretted that events of such peculiar interest to the genuine student of the psychical should be entirely uncorroborated. Such unfortunately, however, is the case.

Our own party of nearly twenty had returned to Montreal that very day, and I was left in solitary possession for a week or two longer, in order to accomplish some important "reading" for the law which I had foolishly neglected during the summer.

It was late in September, and the big trout and maskinonge were stirring themselves in the depths of the lake, and beginning slowly to move up to the surface waters as the north winds and early frosts lowered their temperature. Already the maples were crimson and gold, and the wild laughter of the loons echoed in sheltered bays that never knew their strange cry in the summer.

With a whole island to oneself, a two-story cottage, a canoe, and only the chipmunks, and the farmer's weekly visit with eggs and bread, to disturb one, the opportunities for hard reading might be very great. It all depends!

The rest of the party had gone off with many warnings to beware of Indians, and not to stay late enough to be the victim of a frost that thinks nothing of forty below zero. After they had gone, the loneliness of the situation made itself unpleasantly felt. There were no other islands within six or seven miles, and though the mainland forests lay a couple of miles behind me, they stretched for a very great distance unbroken by any signs of human habitation. But though the island was completely deserted and silent, the rocks and trees that had echoed human laughter and voices almost every hour of the day for two months could not fail to retain some memories of it all; and I was not surprised to fancy I heard a shout or a cry as I passed from rock to rock, and more than once to imagine that I heard my own name called aloud.

In the cottage there were six tiny little bedrooms divided from one another by plain unvarnished partitions of pine. A wooden bedstead, a mattress and a chair, stood in each room, but I only found two mirrors, and one of these was broken.

The boards creaked a good deal as I moved about, and the signs of

occupation were so recent that I could hardly believe I was alone. I half expected to find some one left behind, still trying to crowd into a box more than it would hold. The door of one room was stiff, and refused for a moment to open, and it required very little persuasion to imagine some one was holding the handle on the inside, and that when it opened I should meet a pair of human eyes.

A thorough search of the floor led me to select as my own sleeping quarters a little room with a diminutive balcony over the verandah roof. The room was very small, but the bed was large, and had the best mattress of them all. It was situated directly over the sitting room where I should live and do my "reading," and the miniature window looked out to the rising sun. With the exception of a narrow path which led from the front door and verandah through the trees to the boat-landing, the island was densely covered with maples, hemlocks, and cedars. The trees gathered in round the cottage so closely that the slightest wind made the branches scrape the roof and tap the wooden walls. A few moments after sunset the darkness became impenetrable, and ten yards beyond the glare of the lamps that shone through the sitting room windows—of which there were four—you could not see an inch before your nose, nor move a step without running up against a tree.

The rest of that day I spent moving my belongings from my tent to the sitting-room, taking stock of the contents of the larder, and chopping enough wood for the stove to last me for a week. After that, just before sunset, I went round the island a couple of times in my canoe for precaution's sake. I had never dreamed of doing this before, but when a man's alone he does things that never occur to him when he is one of a large party.

How lonely the island seemed when I landed again! The sun was down, and twilight is unknown in these northern regions. The darkness comes up at once. The canoe pulled up and turned over on her face, I groped my way up the little narrow pathway to the verandah. The six lamps were soon burning merrily in the front room; but in the kitchen, where I "dined," the shadows were so gloomy, and the lamplight was so inadequate, that the stars could be seen peeping through the cracks between the rafters.

I turned in early that night. Though it was calm and there was no wind, the creaking of my bedstead and the musical gurgle of the water over the rocks below were not the only sounds that reached my ears. As I lay awake, the appalling emptiness of the house grew upon me. The corridors and vacant rooms seemed to echo innumerable footsteps, shufflings, the rustle of skirts, and a constant undertone of whispering. When sleep at length overtook me, the breathings and noises, however, passed gently to mingle with the voices of my dreams.

A week passed by, and the "reading" progressed favourably. On the tenth day of my solitude, a strange thing happened. I awoke after a good night's sleep to find myself possessed with a marked repugnance for my room. The air seemed to stifle me. The more I tried to define the cause of this dislike, the more unreasonable it appeared. There was something about the room that made me afraid. Absurd as it seems, this feeling clung to me obstinately while dressing, and more than once I caught myself shivering, and conscious of an inclination to get out of the room as quickly as possible. The more I tried to laugh it away, the more real it became; and when at last I was dressed, and went out into the passage, and downstairs into the kitchen, it was with feelings of relief, such as I might imagine would accompany one's escape from the presence of a dangerous contagious disease.

While cooking my breakfast, I carefully recalled every night spent in the room, in the hope that I might in some way connect the dislike I now felt with some disagreeable incident that had occurred in it. But the only thing I could recall was one stormy night when I suddenly awoke and heard the boards creaking so loudly in the corridor that I was convinced there were people in the house. So certain was I of this, that I had descended the stairs, gun in hand, only to find the doors and windows securely fastened, and the mice and black-beetles in sole possession of the floor. This was certainly not sufficient to account for the strength of my feelings.

The morning hours I spent in steady reading, and when I broke off in the middle of the day for a swim and luncheon, I was very much surprised, if not a little alarmed, to find that my dislike for the room had, if anything, grown stronger. Going upstairs to get a book, I experienced the most marked aversion to entering the room, and while within I was conscious all the time of an uncomfortable feeling that was half uneasiness and half apprehension. The result of it was that, instead of reading, I spent the afternoon on the water, paddling and fishing, and when I got home about sundown, brought with me half a dozen delicious black bass for the supper table and the larder.

As sleep was an important matter to me at this time, I had decided that if my aversion to the room was so strongly marked on my return as it had been before, I would move my bed down into the sitting-room, and sleep there. This was, I argued, in no sense a concession to an absurd and fanciful fear, but simply a precaution to insure a good night's sleep. A bad night involved the loss of the next day's reading,—a loss I was not prepared to incur.

I accordingly moved my bed downstairs into a corner of the sitting-room facing the door, and was moreover uncommonly glad when the operation was completed, and the door of the bedroom closed finally upon the shadows, the silence, and the strange *fear* that shared the room with them.

The croaking stroke of the kitchen clock sounded the hour of eight as I finished washing up my few dishes, and closing the kitchen door behind me, passed into the front room. All the lamps were lit, and their reflectors, which I had polished up during the day, threw a blaze of light into the room.

Outside the night was still and warm. Not a breath of air was stirring; the waves were silent, the trees motionless, and heavy clouds hung like an oppressive curtain over the heavens. The darkness seemed to have rolled up with unusual swiftness, and not the faintest glow of colour remained to show where the sun had set. There was present in the atmosphere that ominous and overwhelming silence which so often precedes the most violent storms.

I sat down to my books with my brain unusually clear, and in my heart the pleasant satisfaction of knowing that five black bass were lying in the ice-house, and that to-morrow morning the old farmer would arrive with fresh bread and eggs. I was soon absorbed in my books.

As the night wore on the silence deepened. Even the chipmunks were still; and the boards of the floors and walls ceased creaking. I read on steadily till, from the gloomy shadows of the kitchen, came the hoarse sound of the clock striking nine. How loud the strokes sounded! They were like blows of a big hammer. I closed one book and opened another, feeling that I was just warming up to my work.

This, however, did not last long. I presently found that I was reading the same paragraphs over twice, simple paragraphs that did not require such effort. Then I noticed that my mind began to wander to other things, and the effort to

recall my thoughts became harder with each digression. Concentration was growing momentarily more difficult. Presently I discovered that I had turned over two pages instead of one, and had not noticed my mistake until I was well down the page. This was becoming serious. What was the disturbing influence? It could not be physical fatigue. On the contrary, my mind was unusually alert, and in a more receptive condition than usual. I made a new and determined effort to read, and for a short time succeeded in giving my whole attention to my subject. But in a very few moments again I found myself leaning back in my chair, staring vacantly into space.

Something was evidently at work in my sub-consciousness. There was something I had neglected to do. Perhaps the kitchen door and windows were not fastened. I accordingly went to see, and found that they were! The fire perhaps needed attention. I went in to see, and found that it was all right! I looked at the lamps, went upstairs into every bedroom in turn, and then went round the house, and even into the ice-house. Nothing was wrong; everything was in its place. Yet something *was* wrong! The conviction grew stronger and stronger within me.

When I at length settled down to my books again and tried to read, I became aware, for the first time, that the room seemed growing cold. Yet the day had been oppressively warm, and evening had brought no relief. The six big lamps, moreover, gave out heat enough to warm the room pleasantly. But a chilliness, that perhaps crept up from the lake, made itself felt in the room, and caused me to get up to close the glass door opening on to the verandah.

For a brief moment I stood looking out at the shaft of light that fell from the windows and shone some little distance down the pathway, and out for a few feet into the lake.

As I looked, I saw a canoe glide into the pathway of light, and immediately crossing it, pass out of sight again into the darkness. It was perhaps a hundred feet from the shore, and it moved swiftly.

I was surprised that a canoe should pass the island at that time of night, for all the summer visitors from the other side of the lake had gone home weeks before, and the island was a long way out of any line of water traffic.

My readings from this moment did not make very good progress, for somehow the picture of that canoe, gliding so dimly and swiftly across the narrow track of light on the black waters, silhouetted itself against the background of my mind with singular vividness. It kept coming between my eyes and the printed page. The more I thought about it the more surprised I became. It was of larger build than any I had seen during the past summer months, and was more like the old Indian war canoes with the high curving bows and stern and wide beam. The more I tried to read, the less success attended my efforts; and finally I closed my books and went out on the verandah to walk up and down a bit, and shake the chilliness out of my bones.

The night was perfectly still, and as dark as imaginable. I stumbled down the path to the little landing wharf, where the water made the very faintest of gurgling under the timbers. The sound of a big tree falling in the mainland forest, far across the lake, stirred echoes in the heavy air, like the first guns of a distant night attack. No other sound disturbed the stillness that reigned supreme.

As I stood upon the wharf in the broad splash of light that followed me from the sitting-room windows, I saw another canoe cross the pathway of uncertain light upon the water, and disappear at once into the impenetrable gloom that lay beyond. This time I saw more distinctly than before. It was like the former

"As I looked I saw a canoe glide into the pathway of light"

canoe, a big birch-bark, with high-crested bows and stern and broad beam. It was paddled by two Indians, of whom the one in the stern—the steerer—appeared to be a very large man. I could see this very plainly, and though the second canoe was much nearer the island than the first, I judged that they were both on their way home to the Government Reservation, which was situated some fifteen miles away upon the mainland.

I was wondering in my mind what could possibly bring any Indians down to

this part of the lake at such an hour of the night, when a third canoe, of precisely similar build, and also occupied by two Indians, passed silently round the end of the wharf. This time the canoe was very much nearer shore, and it suddenly flashed into my mind that the three canoes were in reality one and the same, and that only one canoe was circling the island!

This was by no means a pleasant reflection, because if it were the correct solution of the unusual appearance of the three canoes in this lonely part of the lake at so late an hour, the purpose of the two men could only reasonably be considered to be in some way connected with myself. I had never known of the Indians attempting any violence upon the settlers who shared the wild, inhospitable country with them; at the same time, it was not beyond the region of possibility to suppose . . But then I did not care to even think of such hideous possibilities, and my imagination immediately sought relief in all manner of other solutions to the problem, which indeed came readily enough to my mind, but did not succeed in recommending themselves to my reason.

Meanwhile, by a sort of instinct, I stepped back out of the bright light in which I had hitherto been standing, and waited in the deep shadow of a rock to see if the canoe would again make its appearance. Here I could see and not be seen, and the precaution seemed a wise one.

After less than five minutes the canoe, as I had anticipated, made its fourth appearance. This time it was not twenty yards from the wharf, and I saw that the Indians meant to land. I recognised the two men as those who had passed before, and the steerer was certainly an immense fellow. It was unquestionably the same canoe. There could be no longer any doubt that for some purpose of their own the men had been going round and round the island for some time, waiting for an opportunity to land. I strained my eyes to follow them in the darkness, but the night had completely swallowed them up, and not even the faintest swish of the paddles reached my ears as the Indians plied their long and powerful strokes. The canoe would be round again in a few moments, and this time it was possible that the men might land. It was well to be prepared. I knew nothing of their intentions, and two to one (when the two are big Indians) late at night on a lonely island was not exactly my idea of pleasant intercourse.

In a corner of the sitting-room, leaning up against the back wall, stood my Marlin rifle, with ten cartridges in the magazine and one lying snugly in the greased breach. There was just time to get up to the house and take up a position of defence in that corner. Without an instant's hesitation I ran up to the verandah, carefully picking my way among the trees, so as to avoid being seen in the light. Entering the room, I shut the door leading to the verandah, and as quickly as possible turned out every one of the six lamps. To be in a room so brilliantly lighted, where my every movement could be observed from outside, while I could see nothing but impenetrable darkness at every window, was by all laws of warfare an unnecessary concession to the enemy. And this enemy, if enemy it was to be, was far too wily and dangerous to be granted any such advantages.

I stood in the corner of the room, with my back against the wall and my hand on the cold rifle-barrel. The table covered with my books lay between me and the door, but for the first few minutes after the lights were out the darkness was so intense that nothing could be discerned at all. Then, very gradually, the outline of the room became visible, and the framework of the windows began to shape itself dimly before my eyes. After a few minutes the door (its upper half of glass), and the two windows that looked out upon the front verandah, became

specially distinct; and I was glad that this was so, because if the Indians came up to the house I should be able to see their approach, and gather something of their plans. Nor was I mistaken, for there presently came to my ears the peculiar hollow sound of a canoe landing and being carefully dragged up over the rocks. The paddles I distinctly heard being placed underneath, and the silence that ensued thereupon I rightly interpreted to mean that the Indians were stealthily approaching the house.

"Entering the room . . . I turned out every one of the six lamps."

While it would be absurd to claim that I was not alarmed—even frightened—at the gravity of the situation and its possible outcome, I speak the whole truth when I say that I was not overwhelmingly afraid for myself. I was conscious that even at this stage of the night I was passing into a psychical condition in which my sensations seemed no longer normal. Physical fear at no time entered into the nature of my feelings, and though I kept my hand upon my rifle the greater part of the night, I was all the time conscious that its assistance could be of little avail against the terrors that I had to face. More than once I seemed to feel most curiously that I was in no real sense a part of the proceedings, nor actually involved in them, but that I was playing the part of a spectator—a spectator, moreover, on a psychic rather than on a material plane. Many of my sensations that night were too vague for definite description and analysis, but the main feeling that will stay with me to the end of my days is the awful horror of it all, and the miserable sensation that if the strain had lasted a little longer than was actually the case my mind must inevitably have given way.

Meanwhile I stood still in my corner, and waited patiently for what was to come. The house was as still as the grave, but the inarticulate voices of the night sang in my ears, and I seemed to hear the blood running in my veins and dancing in my pulses.

If the Indians came to the back of the house, they would find the kitchen door and window securely fastened. They could not get in there without making considerable noise, which I was bound to hear. The only means of getting in was the door that faced me, and I kept my eyes glued on that door without taking them off for the smallest fraction of a second.

My sight adapted itself every minute better to the darkness. I saw the table that nearly filled the room, and left only a narrow passage on each side. I could also make out the straight backs of the wooden chairs pressed up against it, and could even distinguish my papers and inkstand lying on the white oilcloth covering

I thought of the gay faces that had gathered round that table during the summer, and I longed for the sunlight as I had never longed for it before.

Less than three feet to my left the passage-way led to the kitchen, and the stairs leading to the bedrooms above commenced in this passage-way, but almost in the sitting-room itself. Through the windows I could see the dim motionless outlines of the trees; not a leaf stirred, not a branch moved.

A few moments of this awful silence, and then I was aware of a soft tread on the boards of the verandah, so stealthy it seemed an impression directly on my brain rather than upon the nerves of hearing. Immediately afterwards a black figure darkened the glass door, and I perceived that a face was pressed against the upper panes. A shiver ran down my back, and my hair was conscious of a tendency to rise and stand at right angles to my head.

It was the figure of an Indian, broad-shouldered and immense; indeed, the largest figure of a man I have ever seen outside of a circus hall. By some power of light that seemed to generate itself in the brain, I saw the strong dark face with the aquiline nose and high cheek-bones flattened against the glass. The direction of the gaze I could not determine, but faint gleams of light as the big eyes rolled round and showed their whites, told me plainly that no corner of the room escaped their searching.

For what seemed fully five minutes the dark figure stood there, with the huge shoulders bent forward so as to bring the head down to the level of the glass; while behind him, though not nearly so large, swayed to and fro like a bent tree the shadowy form of the other Indian. While I waited in an agony of suspense and agitation for their next movement, little currents of icy sensation ran up and down my spine, and my heart seemed alternately to stop beating, and then start off again with terrifying rapidity. They must have heard its thumping and the singing of the blood in my head! Moreover, I was conscious, as I felt a cold stream of perspiration trickle down my face, of a desire to scream, to shout, to bang the walls like a child, to make a noise, or do anything that would relieve the suspense and bring things to a speedy climax.

It was probably this inclination that led me to another discovery, for when I tried to bring my rifle from behind my back to raise it and have it pointed at the door ready to fire, I found that I was powerless to move. The muscles, paralysed by this strange fear, refused to obey the will. Here indeed was a terrifying complication!

* * * * * * *

There was a faint sound of rattling at the brass knob, and the door was pushed open a couple of inches. A pause of a few seconds, and it was pushed open still farther. Without a sound of footsteps that was appreciable to my ears, the two figures glided into the room, and the man behind gently closed the door after him.

They were alone with me between the four walls. Could they see me standing there, so still and straight in my corner? Had they, perhaps, already seen me? My blood surged and sang like the roll of drums in an orchestra, and though I did my best to suppress my breathing, it sounded like the rushing of wind through a pneumatic tube.

My suspense as to the next move was soon at an end—only, however, to give place to a new and keener alarm. The men had hitherto exchanged no words and no signs, but there were general indications of a movement across the room, and whichever way they went they would have to pass round the table. If they came my way they would have to pass within six inches of my person. While I was considering this very disagreeable possibility, I perceived that the smaller

Indian (smaller by comparison) suddenly raised his arm and pointed to the ceiling. The big fellow raised his head and followed the direction of his companion's arm. I began to understand at last. They were going upstairs, and the room directly overhead to which they pointed had been until this night my bedroom. It was the room in which I had experienced that very morning so strange a sensation of fear, and but for which I should then have been lying asleep in the narrow bed against the window.

The Indians then began to move silently around the room, they were going upstairs, and they were coming round my side of the table. So stealthy were their movements that, but for the abnormally sensitive state of the nerves, I should never have heard them. As it was, their cat-like tread was distinctly audible. Like two monstrous black cats they came round the table toward me, and for the first time I perceived that the smaller of the two dragged something along the floor behind him. As it trailed along over the floor with a soft, sweeping sound, I somehow got the impression that it was a large dead thing with outstretched wings, or a large spreading cedar branch. Whatever it was, I was unable to see it even in outline, and I was too terrified, even had I possessed the power over my muscles, to carry my neck forward in the effort to determine its nature.

Nearer and nearer they came. The leader rested a giant hand upon the table as he moved. My lips were glued together, and the air seemed to burn in my nostrils. I tried to close my eyes, so that I might not see as they passed me, but my eyelids had stiffened, and refused to obey. Would they never get by me? Sensation seemed also to have left my legs, and it was as if I were standing on mere supports of wood or stone. Worse still, I was conscious that I was losing the power of balance, the power to stand upright, or even to lean backwards against the wall. Some force was drawing me forward, and a dizzy terror seized me that I should lose my balance, and topple forward against the Indians just as they were in the act of passing me.

Even moments drawn out into hours must come to an end some time, and almost before I knew it the figures had passed me and had their feet upon the lower step of the stairs leading to the upper bedrooms. There cannot have been six inches between us, and yet I was conscious only of a current of cold air that followed them. They had not touched me, and I was convinced that they had not seen me. Even the trailing thing on the floor behind them had not touched my feet, as I had dreaded it would, and on such an occasion as this I was grateful even for the smallest mercies.

The absence of the Indians from my immediate neighbourhood brought little sense of relief. I stood shivering and shuddering in my corner, and, beyond being able to breathe more freely, I felt no whit less uncomfortable. Also I was aware that a certain light, which, without apparent source or rays, had enabled me to follow their every gesture and movement, had gone out of the room with their departure. An unnatural darkness now filled the room, and pervaded its every corner, so that I could barely make out the positions of the windows and the glass doors.

As I said before, my condition was evidently an abnormal one. The capacity for feeling surprise seemed, as in dreams, to be wholly absent. My senses recorded with unusual accuracy every smallest occurrence, but I was able to draw only the simplest deductions.

The Indians soon reached the top of the stairs, and there they halted for a moment. I had not the faintest clue as to their next movement. They appeared to hesitate. They were listening attentively. Then I heard one of them, who, by the weight of his soft tread, must have been the giant, cross the narrow corridor

and enter the room directly overhead—my own little bedroom. But for the insistence of that unaccountable dread I had experienced there in the morning, I should at that very moment have been lying in the bed with the big Indian in the room standing beside me.

For the space of a hundred seconds there was silence, such as might have existed before the birth of sound. It was followed by a long quivering shriek of terror, which rang out into the night, and ended in a short gulp before it had run its full course. At the same moment the other Indian left his place at the head of the stairs, and joined his companion in the bedroom. I heard the "thing" trailing behind him along the floor. A thud followed, as of something heavy falling, and then all became as still and silent as before.

It was at this point that the atmosphere, surcharged all day with the electricity of a fierce storm, found relief in a dancing flash of brilliant lightning simultaneously with a crash of loudest thunder. For five seconds every article in the room was visible to me with amazing distinctness, and through the windows I saw the tree trunks standing in solemn rows. The thunder pealed and echoed across the lake and among the distant islands, and the flood-gates of heaven then opened and let out their rain in streaming torrents.

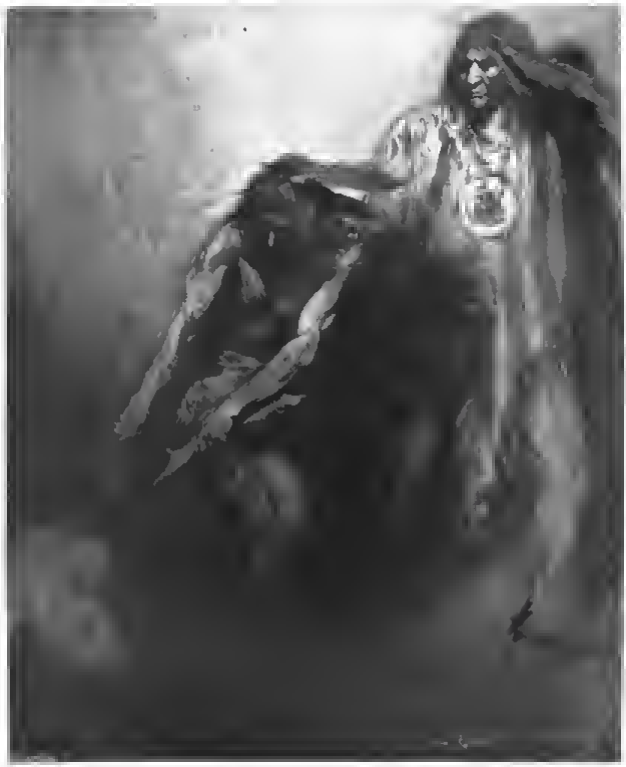
The drops fell with a swift rushing sound upon the still waters of the lake, which leaped up to meet them, and pattered with the rattle of shot on the leaves of the maples and the roof of the cottage. A moment later, and another flash, even more brilliant and of longer duration than the first, lit up the sky from zenith to horizon, and bathed the room momentarily in dazzling whiteness. I could see the rain glistening on the leaves and branches outside. The wind rose suddenly, and in less than a minute the storm that had been gathering all day burst forth in its full fury.

Above all the noisy voices of the elements, the slightest sounds in the room overhead made themselves heard, and in the few seconds of deep silence that followed the shriek of terror and pain I was aware that the movements had commenced again. The men were leaving the room and approaching the top of the stairs. A short pause, and they began to descend. Behind them, tumbling from step to step, I could hear that trailing "thing" being dragged along. It had become ponderous!

I awaited their approach with a degree of calmness, almost of apathy, which was only explicable on the ground that after a certain point Nature applies her own anæsthetic, and a merciful condition of numbness supervenes. On they came, step by step, nearer and nearer, with the shuffling sound of the burden behind growing louder as they approached.

They were already half-way down the stairs when I was galvanised afresh into a condition of terror by the consideration of a new and horrible possibility. It was the reflection that if another vivid flash of lightning were to come when the shadowy procession was in the room, perhaps when it was actually passing in front of me, I should see everything in detail, and worse, be seen myself! I could only hold my breath and wait—wait while the minutes lengthened into hours, and the procession made its slow progress round the room.

The Indians had reached the foot of the staircase. The form of the huge leader loomed in the doorway of the passage, and the burden with an ominous thud had dropped from the last step to the floor. There was a moment's pause while I saw the Indian turn and stoop to assist his companion. Then the procession moved forward again, entered the room close on my left, and began to move slowly round my side of the table. The leader was already beyond me, and



"The leader was already beyond me and his companion, dragging on the floor behind him his burden, was exactly in front of me"

his companion, dragging on the floor behind him the burden, whose confused outline I could dimly make out, was exactly in front of me, when the cavalcade came to a dead halt. At the same moment, with the strange suddenness of thunderstorms, the splash of the rain ceased altogether, and the wind died away into utter silence.

For the space of five seconds my heart seemed to stop beating, and then the worst came. A double flash of lightning lit up the room and its contents with merciless vividness.

The huge Indian leader stood a few feet past me on my right. One leg was stretched forward in the act of taking a step. His immense shoulders were turned toward his companion, and in all their magnificent fierceness I saw the outline of his features. His gaze was directed upon the burden his companion was dragging

along the floor; but his profile, with the big aquiline nose, high cheek-bone, straight black hair and bold chin, burnt itself in that brief instant into my brain never again to fade.

Dwarfish, compared to this gigantic figure, appeared the proportions of the other Indian, who, within twelve inches of my face, was stooping over the thing he was dragging in a position that lent to his person the additional horror of deformity. And the burden, lying upon a sweeping cedar branch which he held and dragged by a long stem, was the body of a white man. The scalp had been neatly lifted, and blood lay in a broad smear upon the cheeks and forehead.

Then for the first time that night the terror that had paralysed my muscles and my will lifted its unholy spell from my soul. With a loud cry I stretched out my arms to seize the big Indian by the throat, and, grasping only air, tumbled forward unconscious upon the ground.

I had recognised the body, and the face was my own!

It was bright daylight when a man's voice recalled me to consciousness. I was lying where I had fallen, and the farmer was standing in the room with the loaves of bread in his hands. The horror of the night was still in my heart, and as the bluff settler helped me to my feet and picked up the rifle which had fallen with me, with many questions and expressions of condolence, I imagine my brief replies were neither self-explanatory nor even intelligible.

That day, after a thorough and fruitless search of the house, I left the island, and went over to spend my last ten days with the farmer, and when the time came for me to leave, the necessary reading had been accomplished, and my nerves had completely recovered their balance.

On the day of my departure the farmer started early in his big boat with my belongings to row to the point, twelve miles distant, where a little steamer ran twice a week for the accommodation of hunters. Late in the afternoon I went off in another direction in my canoe, wishing to see the island once again where I had been the victim of so strange an experience.

In due course I arrived there, and made a tour of the island. I also made a search of the little house, and it was not without a curious sensation in my heart that I entered the little upstairs bedroom. There seemed nothing unusual.

Just after I re-embarked, I saw a canoe gliding ahead of me around the curve of the island. A canoe was an unusual sight at this time of the year, and this one seemed to have sprung from nowhere. Altering my course a little, I watched it disappear around the next projecting point of rock. It had high curving bows, and there were two Indians in it. I lingered with some excitement, to see if it would appear again round the other side of the island, and in less than five minutes it came into view. There were less than two hundred yards between us, and the Indians, sitting on their haunches, were paddling swiftly in my direction.

I never paddled faster in my life than I did in those next few minutes. When I turned to look again, the Indians had altered their course, and were again circling the island.

The sun was sinking behind the forests on the mainland, and the crimson-coloured clouds of sunset were reflected in the waters of the lake, when I looked round for the last time, and saw the big bark canoe and its two dusky occupants still going round the island. Then the shadows deepened rapidly, the lake grew black, and the night wind blew its first breath in my face as I turned a corner, and a projecting bluff of rock hid from my view both island and canoe.

ALGERNON BLACKWOOD.

THE KING'S TASTER.

THE country had been taxed too heavily—even necessaries and commodities were taxed—and the people rose in revolt. It was rumoured that they wanted a monarch no more, and the high dignitaries in office feared that the life of their sovereign was in danger. So the bodyguard was increased tenfold, and every precaution was taken. The young king declared he would rather die than lead the life he was living.

"Is it living?" he would ask impatiently. "Why! I'm scarce allowed to breathe, in case the air has been tainted. For my part, I would walk among my subjects unprotected and unattended. Let those kill me who will. Chase me away they shall not—I was born a king, and a king I will always be. You all tell me these taxes are just and needful, and that the nation will gain by them in the long run; so they must be submitted to. Besides, I will not give in because I am threatened, they can kill me if they choose."

Affairs became worse and worse; the people became more and more desperate, and one morning the king received an anonymous letter to inform him that it had been resolved among certain secret societies that he should die by poison.

"Cowards!" he muttered, turning pale; "so they'll hit me in the dark, will they?"

"Not if we can help it, Sire," said the old prime minister. "You have not known it, but every care has been taken with regard to your food for a long while. Now we'll defy these wretches. There shall be somebody to taste your food, to eat only the meal that you are going to eat a few hours later: you see, time must be given to prove there are no ill effects. Yes, yes; we'll find a king's taster, and he shall eat as you will eat after him."

The king became paler still, and drew himself up proudly.

"My lord," he said, "you seem to think me no less cowardly than these mean creatures. You may know more about taxes, perhaps, than I do, but I'll permit no one to know better than myself in this case. There shall be no king's taster,

"'There shall be no king a taster to fear every mouthful he puts into his mouth'"

to fear every mouthful he puts into his mouth, and to die in agonies that were meant for me."

"But your Majesty's food is always tasted."

"That's different—there has been nothing certain all this time, but now—" and he laughed sadly and mirthlessly—"now it is decided I am to die by poison. There shall be no king's taster."

And he never would have yielded had it not been pointed out to him that there was one person in his kingdom who would really benefit by becoming his taster.

In the big prison then there just happened to be only one prisoner sentenced to death. This man had stolen a donkey from a large farmyard, and was therefore to die in frightful torture. The punishment in this country for stealing cattle was that the culprit should be put in prison and worked like a slave for a year; afterwards, for a month, he should speak to nobody, see nobody, and should be occupied in no way whatever. He should simply wait for the death which he knew was to be dealt to him, and the thought of which was enough to chill the blood in his veins. For at the expiration of the allotted month he would be dragged up a high mountain, when he reached the summit, almost breathless, he would be thrown into a large round case, lined with outstanding blades of steel, the top would be screwed on, and the case, with its sorry burden, would be rolled down the mountain. There would be no breath left in him to lose after that.

The donkey stealer had only three weeks to live, and was sitting in saddest solitude in his damp, loathsome cell, when the door opened to admit the king and some of his privy council.

The king scanned the pallid, sallow, miserable face of the poor prisoner.

"In truth, fellow," he said, "I shall be doing you a service"; and he told him what was required of him. "And," added the king, "if at the end of three weeks neither you nor I die of the fare we have eaten, you shall receive absolute pardon and shall be free again."

So the prisoner's rough, tattered garb was taken off him, and he was clothed in a new suit of a soft grey material, and was driven to the palace. And there he fed only on the food that was served to the king. And he was very hopeful and joyful and happy.

Now, everything went well till the twentieth day, when, as the king was sitting down to dinner, the lord chamberlain rushed in and told him he must not eat, for the king's taster was writhing in pain, and had a violent fit of illness, and the doctors feared he would die.

The consternation was great; and for four-and-twenty hours the king was allowed nothing to pass his lips but some milk that had been drawn by the prime minister's daughter's own fair hands from a cow that had only grazed in the prime minister's own back garden.

However, the analysts found no trace of poison; and the king's taster did not die. And it was he himself who suggested that he had only been suffering from a severe attack of indigestion, brought on by a course of food to which he had never been accustomed. He said he had always had a weak stomach, but had been afraid to own it in case he should not have been considered fitted for the post of king's taster.

The court physician, and the other doctors who had been called in in consultation, acknowledged that he was right, and that it was only an attack of indigestion.

At that hour the sun of the twenty-first day was setting, and the young king took his taster's hand and said before all the assembled courtiers,—

"Sitting in saddest solitude in his damp, loathsome cell"

"You have served your three weeks. I am thankful we are both living; beheve me, if you had died I should have sorely grieved. You are free! Tell me how I am further to reward you. What post will you hold at court? What title shall I bestow on you? What money shall I give you?"

The man fell on his knees, and though his face beamed with happiness and joy, the tears coursed down his pale cheeks

"Sire," he said, in a voice softened with emotion, "I am grateful to God that my life is spared and that I am free. I only want a little money so that I can sometimes help those more needy than myself I should wish to wear always a suit of such modest grey stuff as now clothes me, for grey is the colour of humility Bestow no title on me—a title would suit me as ill as sumptuous fare—but give me a horse, and let me ride by your side to guard you; give me a sword and let me stand by you in the thick of battle, or when an enemy is on you; and let me watch at nights, with my hand on the hilt of that sword, at the door of your chamber while you sleep. Grant me the privilege, my liege, of warding off any danger that may menace you. For three weeks my life has belonged to your Majesty Sire, let it be yours for ever In every way the king's taster would I be to the end."

In the silence that followed the king was much affected.

"So be it," he said, and put his hand to his eyes and sobbed.

And all the courtiers, even the old ones, wept. After a while the king spoke.

"You shall be clothed in your modest grey garb, you shall have a little money to give to the poor, you shall have a horse to ride by my side, and a sword to hold when you stand by me in the thick of battle, or when an enemy is on me, or when you watch at my chamber-door

while I sleep. But a title you shall have, and the one I now give you shall be yours for ever. Rise! I proclaim you the King's Danger Knight, and the Danger Knight you shall be to your dying day."

The king held out his hand, and the Danger Knight touched it with his lips and rose to his feet. And the large hall re-echoed with the courtiers' applause.

Then the young king smilingly said, "You must promise never to steal another donkey."

"Sire," said the Danger Knight, "I repent much of my past crime, and surely I shall not wish to steal a donkey when your Majesty shall have been gracious enough to have presented me with a horse."

"Ah!" said the king, looking thoughtful.

"Any more," continued the Danger Knight timorously, "than your loyal subjects would wish to oust you from your throne if their bread and butter were not made too dear for them to swallow."

"The people rose in revolt."

The king glanced round at his high officers. "There seems much in this," he said. And without another word he stepped out on to the balcony, and stood in the flaming glory of the setting sun.

The people were collected in crowds round the palace; for, withal, the young king was much beloved, and there was general grief when it was reported he had only escaped by chance a horrible death.

There and then he addressed them, and told them that wine, carriages, jewels, and such-like would be taxed, but there would no longer be a tax on the necessaries of life.

He returned radiant to the hall, while the air was still ringing with the glad shouts of the happy multitude. And he took off a long, heavy gold chain which hung round his neck, and passed it over the head of the Danger Knight.

"This chain," said the king, "was my noble father's. Danger Knight, wear it always!"

PHŒBE HART.

GUNDRE sat by his father's bed, waiting till the old man should die. All round him lay the weapons of the chase, each one ready for use, and the door stood wide, giving a glimpse of the moonlit forest swaying its black shadows in the wind. High overhead the great rock which is known as the Giant's Larder rose heavy against the night; solid and square it stood, and at its base the forest shook and moaned.

"Gundre," said the dying man, "wilt thou be a great huntsman, even as thy father has been before thee?"

"I will be a greater," said Gundre.

"From head to foot," said the other, "thou must never be weary."

"What is it to be weary?" asked Gundre.

"Thou must have no fear!"

"What is fear?" asked Gundre.

"Thou must be without pity!"

"What is pity?" asked Gundre; and the old man laughed to hear his son so answer.

"Once I had fear," said he; "so if thou come to the Giants' Larder, and there sit down, thou shalt be greater at the chase than thy father who came not."

Presently in entered the Dark Huntsman, bringing the shoes winged with black raven's feathers, and bound them upon the feet of Gundre's father. Gundre saw how the two talked together, but could hear no word. Yet he knew that now his father was to set his face to the mountains of the moon, and the white hunting fields of the dead, and he wondered why, suddenly, all the light went out of the old man's eyes, and why so wearily he lifted his arms and arrows, and looked back so piteously to his son's face, and so fearfully forward as he trod air in the wake of the Dark Huntsman, and passed with only the sound of the black raven's wings creaking to the wind.

Then Gundre, being rid of him, and free from his long watch, felt the spirit

"'Gundre,' said the dying man, 'wilt thou be a great huntsman?

of the chase spring in his blood. "To-night," said he, "we will hunt together, father, you and I: you in the fields of the dead, and I here with the living." He took up his bow and arrows, and his sharp hunting-knife, and came out upon dark blowing weather and under the bowed forests.

As he went he wondered whence so huge a wind was sprung, and at the clouds which, like solid bodies of the chase, leapt black across the moon, and disappeared again into the heavy cover of night. Here and there in the forest a tree fell as though a foot had been planted on it. Under the heavy strokes of the storm the big game lay like crushed vermin across his path: nothing alive sprang to flee before his coming. Where he stumbled upon a huddled herd of deer, they sought in his eyes for refuge from a higher tyranny, seeming in their dumb terror to call him brother.

In very wrath that they feared him not, he smote at them as he passed, and hearing their moans following him, cared not whether the wounds he dealt had left them to live or die. Young sapling oaks that made a barrier to his path he struck down, crying, "Let them tell the forest to fear Gundre! Though it be the night of the gods' hunting, Gundre, too, shall slay with the best of them!" So he made his way while the storm trampled round him.

On the sound of the wind rode the sound of thunder; jagged lightnings cut and thrust, as though knives played with murder in heaven; rain fell hot as blood. Suddenly in darkness he struck foot and face against a precipitous wall of rock, and heard within a sound like laughter.

All round him the forest strained like the cordage of a ship. Here and there things cracked and snapped till a whole mast went. Even the rock against which Gundre leaned seemed to move, and a groan came up from its under-earth foundations. Then again to his ear from within came a sound of laughter.

He smote hard with his hand, crying, "If there be any living to attend, give me way in!" But storm and thunder drowned his utterance: only from that stroke loose pieces of rock fell on him. Half doubtfully a voice within said, "Did one of our brothers knock then?" But laughter swelled and none came to open.

Over his head a pine tugged at its roots, and rove itself free for death. Down beside Gundre it fell headlong, and beat out its life against the rock. "Nay," cried a voice within, "but a brother did knock!" and at the word the rock rolled back its door in a stream of light.

Gundre made quick entrance, and hung in bird's-eye amaze on the verge of a huge pit, to behold where down below giants feasted and caroused.

The fumes of their wine rose up to his brain: looking aloft they hailed him: "Who are you, little brother, that so small can knock so loud?"

"I am Gundre," answered the youth, "the son of old Gundre, whom to-night the Dark Huntsmen carried away to the hunting fields of the dead."

The giants laughed loud and long to hear that. "By what trick," they asked, "wast thou able to strike so, being a mortal?"

Gundre answered, "At my bidding a pine fell down and struck for me."

A little sound of malice grew into their great laugh. "See, then," they called up to him, "since thou art come, we bid thee leap down and join us at our feast!"

Gundre looked down that great wall of rock, and at the giants' heads far below: then he gathered himself up and leapt. A giant caught him in mid air as he fell.

"Why, thou midget," cried the giant, dandling him in mockery, "thou art but a bare mouthful: scarcely wast thou worth the catching!"

"Thou art many mouthfuls," cried Gundre, angered, "yet I will have one!" and turning he bit the giant in the thick of his great thumb, till the dark blood spirted. Whereat they all laughed yet more merrily, and making a place for him in their midst, "Thou hast tasted giant's blood," said they; "be fellow with us now and eat!"

On the board there was set a great roast, and Gundre, eating, marvelled what flesh it might be: for it had the taste of venison, yet was rank like a beast of prey, and had webbed feet and also wings, and of every part Gundre took and ate as much as was given him.

There was a stroke outside the rock, so that the cavern shook. "There is a brother knocking!" said one, and bade open the door.

Then entered in the Dark Huntsman, bearing in his hands the winged shoes of black raven's feather, and sat down in the place kept for him.

"Where have you been, brother?" asked they all.

"I have been gathering old Gundre to his fathers, to the fields of the dead hunting. By his bedside sat young Gundre, and wept not for his father's going. He is without pity: therefore I think one day we shall see him here.

"There he sits!" cried all the others, pointing; and the Dark Huntsman, looking across, saw Gundre, and suddenly laughed loud.

Gundre said to him, "Thy laugh is like the rattling of dead men's bones: how

"'Let them tell the forest to fear Gundre!'"

is it that now I can hear thee speak, and then could not when I saw thee hold speech with my father?"

The Dark Huntsman answered, "Thou wast then in the world of the living; and we spake in the world of the dead and the secrets of the dead. But now thou art between the two worlds of the living and dead, therefore thou canst hear me speak."

"How," said Gundre, "am I between the two worlds? for I am living."

"Thou art at the point of death," said the Dark Huntsman

"Then," said Gundre, "at least I shall know the secrets of the dead!"

"Nay!" cried the other giants uneasily to the Dark Huntsman, "while he lives tell him not the secrets of the dead!"

"Since he is here," replied the other, "what he asks I must tell"

"'Oh, Gundre, great hunting shall be thine on the fields of dead hunting,' cried the giants."

The giants murmured with black looks, "He was ours, he was our prey; for he was without fear and without pity. Why wilt thou send him from us?"

But the Dark Huntsman said to Gundre, "Ask, and I will answer!"

Gundre stood up and said, "Of the mountains of the moon, whither I must go, tell me!"

The Dark Huntsman answered, "Long, and smooth, and white the way lies over them, clear with the track of the chase. With no wind the scent comes to the hunter as it comes to the hound, hound and huntsman in one is he who hunts in the fields of the dead."

"Why," cried Gundre, "that is great hunting, when all the joys of the hunt are in one man's body!"

And the giants, nearing him, drew a deep breath and laughed.

"Oh, Gundre, great hunting shall be thine on the fields of dead hunting!" cried they.

Gundre said, "Of the prey, tell me! Is it fleet and fierce, and does it feel

"'Pass forth, brother,' said the Dark Huntsman,' who knowest the secrets of the dead

fear, and throw back its head and sob at the sound of the sharp death springing behind?"

And the Dark Huntsman said, "It is fleet and fierce, guarding its ghostly life; for it keeps memories of its old life, and of its fear of man, and of the sharp anguish he inflicts on earth whenever he has the power: therefore it runs and trembles for fear."

"Why," cried Gundre, "this is life indeed! Why do men fear death?"

And the giants all shouted together, "Oh Gundre, thou hast been told the secrets of the dead, therefore thou shalt not fear death!"

Gundre said, "If the prey flees, and fears, and trembles, does it also die? Is the death sharp and full of anguish? Does it acknowledge its destiny and man's lordship as it pours out its blood to his stroke?"

Darkly the giants muttered: then the Dark Huntsman made answer: "Though they flee and tremble, it is from an empty fear; for in truth, at the death stroke, those ghostly bodies feel no pain, nor does any blood flow out of their pale, smitten sides; but like smoke off a quenched hearth, and like mist from a river, they pass away out of that cold world. And being slain there, they become released, and return once more to the warm life of earth, only the slayer, who slays and who is not slain, comes never again."

Quickly Gundre leapt upon his feet, and cried, "What is this beast, with webbed feet and wings, and the scent of a beast of prey, that leaps on me? I fear! I tell you, I fear death!"

The giants rose up, and threw over the board. They lifted the benches and meks upon which they had been sitting, and as a wave heaves up to overwhelm a ship, so against Gundre they heaved up in wrath and violence.

Swiftly to his side trod the Dark Huntsman, and fastened on him the shoes winged with black raven's feathers; and "Pass forth, brother," said he, "who knowest the secrets of the dead!"

Up from the fumes of their wine, and the reek of strong meats, Gundre rose ghost-like and trod air. Before him the giants and the rock itself gave way; and he could see the Dark Huntsman leading the way and looking back with eyes he might not read.

Then darkness beat down upon his brain, and pain and feebleness; and in his throat a strange taste arose, like the saltness of the sea. And when he again opened his eyes he saw before him the white mountains of the moon, where the doomed huntsmen strode fast, pursuing the bloodless prey, dealing with a terrible hunger in their hearts, deaths that gave no pain and cut off no lives from the glad light of day.

"Now at last I fear death!" cried Gundre, the son of old Gundre the huntsman.

"Yet still thou hast not learned pity!" answered the Dark Huntsman, and left him there to his hunting on the cold mountains of the moon.

LAURENCE HOUSMAN.